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BY

OSSIP SCHUBIN,

AUTHOR OF

"COUNTESS ERIKA'S APPRENTICESHIP," "O THOU, MY AUSTRIA!" ETC.

AFTER THE GERMAN

BY

MARY J. SAFFORD,

TRANSLATOR OF "THE BURGOMASTER'S WIFE," ETC., ETC., ETC.

Qu'as-tu fait, qu'as-tu fait de ta jeunesse?



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## I.

“RUINED!” His brother had just told him so, curtly and bluntly. He mechanically repeated the word; he could not grasp its true meaning. “Ruined!” He smiled while uttering it, as if discussing some amusing subject.

“Yes, completely ruined!” his brother repeated, but in a very different tone, a stern, rebuking voice which compressed into the one short word a whole lecture,—“completely ruined! We discussed the matter yesterday with Hunter for two hours. After settling your debts you will have, by very careful investment of the remainder of your capital, an income of three hundred pounds per annum.”

“Three hundred pounds!” said the ruined man, slowly. “Three hundred pounds!” he repeated; “and I am to live on that!”

“It is all you have left,” repeated his brother, with a sort of cruel satisfaction, as if he wanted to say, “I always told you so.”

“Ah, but you are forgetting something,” replied the younger, phlegmatically,—“credit, my



dear fellow, the most faithful friend of lavish spendthrifts, a sort of Marshal Bertrand for accompanying ruined rascals to St. Helena.”

The older brother's face grew grave, nay, his expression became actually puzzled.

This momentous conversation took place in London on a rainy day in May—what May day in London is not rainy?—in a handsome suite of bachelor apartments in the second story of a house in Mandeville Place. The exterior of the house was chocolate color, smoke-blackened, bare, and ugly, like almost all London dwellings, but the room where the two brothers were was a little masterpiece of tasteful comfort. Beautiful pieces of old-fashioned carved wooden furniture were crowded among deep, low arm-chairs, ottomans covered with Persian rugs, and all sorts of valuable artistic curios; the fragrance of fresh flowers blended with the smoke of Turkish tobacco. Every variety of hot-house blossom which could be obtained at that season was arranged in faience jars, tall glasses, or small vases of Venetian glass decorated with gold arabesques. Color effects were studied everywhere. The damp, rainy air streamed in through the windows, but a bright, cheerful fire blazed on the hearth.

On the walls of the apartment, which was somewhat low for its dimensions, hung pictures of genuine value instead of the odalisques and dancing-girls which usually decorate bachelor lodgings,—a Corot with spring foliage lashed by the wind, and air-sprites dancing in mad merriment, a flower-



piece by Diaz, and several landscapes by Claude Monet. The little room was evidently the abode of an epicurean whose senses had been ennobled by contact with a very idealistic soul.

One felt an involuntary thrill of sympathy for the man whose good taste had created this environment, with which, moreover, he was in perfect harmony. He was an Englishman, an Englishman to the finger-tips; but he belonged to that class created by the levelling spirit of contradiction in England which forms so striking a contrast to the pharisaic condemnation of pleasure characteristic of the average Briton.

His capacity for enjoyment left nothing to be desired, and he imposed very little restraint upon his epicureanism. Talented, not without penetration, impulsive in judgment, hasty in action, and capricious, he was, nevertheless, very tender-hearted. A spendthrift by nature, he flung nothing more lavishly into the highway than the wealth of his heart, which he squandered right and left, without asking whether the creatures on whom he bestowed his affections were worthy or not. He could not endure the sight of suffering!

His outward aspect corresponded with the inner man. He was tall and slender, with a frame which had been steeled yet at the same time rendered supple by all sorts of athletic exercises; his feet were long and slender, but large rather than small; his hands very beautiful in form, strong and brown, with slim fingers. His head bore a resemblance—by no means rare in England—to Lord Byron.



The curly, light-brown hair was cut very short; the brow was broad and straight; the nose short; the mouth and chin were unusually well shaped; the upper lip was rather short. Of course he did not habitually keep his eyes wide open and uplifted with the conventional gaze of enthusiasm which we see in Lord Byron's numerous busts and portraits.

Jack Ferrars was undeniably an attractive specimen of humanity, but he had his faults. He was reckless and had a reprehensible inclination to run into debt.

Meanwhile, Jack's remark concerning credit had greatly excited his elder brother.

"Credit!" he cried, "credit! Don't you understand that it is unprincipled to use credit which no longer has any foundation? Who is to meet your obligations?"

Jack thrust his hands deep into his pockets. "You, I suppose," he said, lazily, raising his eyebrows.

"I? Why should I suffer for your extravagance?"

Sir Bryan Ferrars was in every respect the ordinary Englishman, or, to avoid any possible offence to his august person, the ordinary English gentleman. True, his grandmother had been a washerwoman, and his grandfather had made his way up from a common workman to a wealthy manufacturer, but he had forgotten the first fact, and no longer believed the second. That his maternal grandfather had been an earl, on the contrary, was ever present to his mind. He formed in every respect a most striking



contrast to his brother, being of middle height, bald, faultlessly shaved, faultlessly dressed; pale, formal, with no individuality except that of his class and his nation. He produced the impression of a colorless, tasteless fruit which has ripened in the shade.

“Why should I suffer for your extravagance?” cried this pattern Englishman, fiercely.

“The support of poor relations is a tax which a man like you pays to his position,” replied Jack, leaning comfortably back in his arm-chair and blowing rings of smoke towards the ceiling.

“You have no comprehension of the phrase which supports civilization, the sense of duty,” angrily retorted the baronet, who, among other characteristic traits of the class of human beings to which he belonged, possessed that of not understanding a joke.

Jack glanced with a very humorous expression through the blue curtain of smoke which separated him from his brother.

“But, my dear fellow, how am I to exist? I can’t live on three hundred pounds, even in Boulogne. H’m! I might enter into an agreement with my Chinese friend Ten-ar-hae and open a tea-shop in Bond Street, in case you make up your mind to advance the necessary capital.”

“I have no ready money at my disposal,” replied the baronet, coldly; “besides, I must say frankly that it seems to me you might undertake something else, something which—ah!—which would not lower our family.”



"Yes, but what am I to do?" Jack raised his eyebrows inquiringly.

"First of all, you can sell your art-treasures," cried the baronet, tartly, as his eyes wandered over the pictures adorning the walls. "Your expenditures in this direction have always been beyond your means."

"Ah, part with my favorite pictures? Perhaps you mean to buy them at a reduced price, Bryan?"

"I should not object to doing so."

"Aha! That's very delightful! Well, we can make a rough estimate at once. There's the Crome,—three hundred pounds."

"Two hundred and fifty would really be a very high price," replied the baronet, eagerly. "Christie's last sale showed a marked decline in the value of the old English landscape-painters."

"Indeed! Then I'll wait for the next rise," Jack answered, coolly. "A thousand pounds for the Corot."

"Jack! are you crazy?" cried Sir Bryan, who seemed to regard the offer as a direct attack upon his purse. "Five hundred pounds would be ample."

"A difference of opinion between two equally competent judges of art," replied Jack, raising his shoulders. "I value my Corot at a thousand pounds."

"H'm! Shall I send an expert to appraise the pictures?" asked Sir Bryan, after a pause.

"No, thank you, I'll see to it myself; but on



farther consideration I have given up the idea of parting with my paintings."

"Then how do you mean to live?"

"On my income," Jack answered, humorously.

"That is impossible!" Sir Bryan retorted.

"But you know how hard I have always tried to help you. I have never hesitated at trifles."

"You were always generous to me. I owe you that inkstand," observed Jack, pointing to a huge monstrosity which adorned his writing-desk, and on which two funeral urns guarded by two sphinxes rose from a black marble slab. "Well, then, what proposal have you to make?"

"Your university education entitles you to a position in the Church. I have a living in my gift; it is at your disposal."

"Ah! five hundred pounds a year and, if I am fortunate, an invitation to dine at the manor-house twice a month. Do you know of nothing more tempting?" drawled Jack.

"No!" said Sir Bryan, curtly, almost impatiently. His brother's careless tone irritated him. "Consider the matter. Come and dine with us to-morrow—no, let it be lunch; I remember that we have invited several to dinner, and London dining-rooms are so inconveniently small."

"Pray make no more excuses; it isn't worth talking about," Jack laughed good-humoredly.

"Why—of course one can speak frankly to relatives." The baronet drew out his watch. "My time is up!" he exclaimed. "I must go to the house. So farewell, Jack,—until to-morrow.



Think of my offer,—there is a beautiful garden at the rectory.” With these words this model of a virtuous Briton and affectionate brother vanished.

Jack remained standing in the middle of the room with his hands thrust into his pockets and his shoulders raised almost to his ears, gazing into vacancy with a very strange smile on his lips. Suddenly the door behind which the baronet had disappeared opened again.

“Have you forgotten anything, Bryan?” asked Jack.

“Yes, my umbrella. There it is. Thanks.” Then leaning on the gnarled handle of his umbrella, the baronet gazed thoughtfully at his younger brother. “An idea has come into my mind,” he said.

“What is it?”

“You might marry.”

“I?” Jack started in surprise. “What put that into your head? To the best of my recollection I have compromised no young lady by any special attentions of late, so I deserve no lectures on that subject.”

“Oh, this is no time for poor jokes; you must attend to improving your circumstances.”

“Ergo, engage yourself as soon as possible to some unprotected young creature who has a million in her purse and—unluckily for her—an unoccupied heart in her breast, and then persuade yourself that you have fallen in love with her in order to find a plausible excuse for stretching yourself in a comfortable nest,” said Jack.



"You are as fond of talking as some people are of drink," said the baronet, reprovingly.

"Yes, that's why you wanted to put me in your pulpit!" cried Jack. "But—h'm!—if I'm to turn my loquacity to account professionally, I should prefer to try Parliament. By the way, couldn't you help me to a political career? Or would you fear my rivalry?"

"Oh, don't talk such nonsense!" muttered the irritated baronet. "I have no more time to lose. It was only a suggestion."

"A vague one,—or have you thought of any special person?" asked Jack.

"Of course."

"Whom?"

"Mary Winter," said the baronet, quietly. "I don't see why you shouldn't marry Mary Winter."

"Why you shouldn't marry Mary Winter." Of all his long conversation with his brother Jack remembered only that one sentence. He glanced around the comfortable room, and a strange feeling stole over him,—the feeling a person has who is running up a hotel bill which he can no longer pay. "I must give notice," he murmured. For the first time he realized what a total change in his whole life, what a sacrifice of all his pleasant, expensive habits, was connected with the loss of his property. "H'm! To live on three hundred pounds a year or run in debt!" he muttered.

Hitherto it had troubled him very little to run in debt. Of all his comfortable, expensive habits



this was the most comfortable, the most costly. In the expectation that everything could be easily settled after the death of an old aunt who had promised to make him her heir, he had paid with the utmost indifference his three, four, nay, on some occasions five, per cent. monthly. But—but——

There are three things which will render the most kindly women cruel: to wound their vanity, to excite their jealousy, or to offend their sense of decorum. This latter crime (it often proceeds from mere want of tact) Jack had committed against his Aunt Jessamy.

Aunt Jessamy was a spinster of eighty, who cared for three things alone: her religion, her prudery, and—Jack. She went through life armed with a pair of blinders so large that she had actually managed to exist eighty years without any suspicion of the wickedness of the world and the young men who were in it. Once, at some races where Jack had not expected to see her, she discovered him with several other very gay young fellows on a drag beside a very pretty young lady. She beckoned to him. He flushed crimson. A friend of hers, who was not well disposed towards Jack, explained the situation. The consequence was that she spent a sleepless night, and the next day sent for her lawyer, with whose assistance she completely changed her will. She died before she had time to be reconciled to Jack and repent her precipitancy.

When the document was opened it appeared that she had left her whole fortune to build a



house for Christian youths in the East End of London,—a Young Men's Home on a religious foundation.

This was a disagreeable surprise for Jack, and the consequence of it—namely, a close examination of his financial circumstances which resulted in the discovery of a great shrinkage of his property—proved more disagreeable still.

“To have no more debts!” he murmured, “to have no more debts!”

Three hundred pounds,—nothing but three hundred pounds a year, and this sum he received from the rent of two houses in a remote suburb of London. True, there were building lots adjoining them,—building lots which, however they may appear, always afford a splendid arena for the hopes of people who chance to be in pecuniary need. Yes, the building lots would sell for a round sum some day,—but when?—and meanwhile—— Jack was beginning to consider the matter seriously. Suddenly his thoughts were checked by an obstacle which aroused his distrust, though a very acceptable future lay beyond it. “Well,”—he passed his hand across his brow,—“well, h'm!”—this time his thoughts cleared the obstacle,—“well, it is certainly very foolish to reject wise advice merely because it was given by a stupid fellow. Why shouldn't I marry Mary Winter, after all?”

He stretched out his long arms, yawning and twisting as a school-boy does before he can make up his mind to set about preparing a specially



tiresome exercise, then starting up, he seized his hat and cane, ran down-stairs to the street, hailed the first hansom he met, and calling to the driver, "Ivy Lodge, Putney," rolled on towards the further development of his fate.

Mary Winter was Jack's step-cousin. His aunt was Mary's step-mother, consequently they had both had, as it were, the same grandfather, though in other respects they certainly possessed very little in common.

There is in England no caste confined rigidly to children and grandchildren. No country in Europe grants to human ambition a freer, more individual development. With the aid of a university education any one may attain the highest position in the land,—below the crown,—namely, the Order of the Garter and admission to White's,—*vide* Lord Beaconsfield.

There is no impenetrable exclusiveness in England. But, on the other hand, there are two classes of humanity that hold rigidly aloof from each other,—the class which seeks pleasure and the class which is bored. Of course this applies only to the educated classes.

True, there is also a third class,—the people, but they have no time for pleasure or boredom. Besides performing the hard labor of the nation, they serve as an object for investigations of questions of national economy, as well as various humane or inhuman experiments, thus forming, as it were, the background for the other two classes,—a very



gloomy background, against which one stands relieved in a variety of brilliant colors, the other in simple gray.

In the former class pleasure, ennobled to an art, nay, almost elevated to a science, forms the one serious life-task of its members. In the latter, people turn from it as a spell of Satan and stop it on the frontier of the virtuous community as a contraband article. Human nature, of course, asserts its rights, often in a very turbulent fashion, but we will not enter into detail at present.

Although Jack Ferrars was Mary's cousin, he belonged to the class of pleasure-seekers and Mary to the one which is bored.

It happened in this way. Jack's grandfather, as has been said, was an intelligent workman who, by long, persistent labor, by the invention of improvements in weaving, by clever combinations and unexpected pieces of good fortune, had first risen to be a partner in the business and later the independent head of one of the largest firms in Manchester. At sixty he was an immensely wealthy man, who, besides extensive weaving- and spinning-mills, owned various other property,—a large country estate in Oxfordshire with a park larger than many a German nobleman's estate, a conservatory where all the year round he could gather bunches of grapes whose colossal size might vie with Joshua's of Biblical fame, and a residence which he had rebuilt according to his own taste—many people lamented it—from a picturesque ruin of the Elizabethan style to a somewhat sombre



modern structure, whose rooms were so large that each would have held a village church and steeple, and whose lower floor, through its lofty plate-glass windows, afforded a view of a lawn stretching like a green-plush carpet between huge rhododendron hedges and lofty ash-trees.

Besides all these things he had two children, a son and a daughter. The education of the daughter, who was several years older than her brother, occurred in a comparatively undeveloped stage of the Ferrars family ambition. Very talented, reading all kinds of interesting literature, and keenly appreciative of artistic beauty, Jane Ferrars had found it impossible to lead the repressed life, darkened by all sorts of alarming religious chimeras, of the prosperous but narrow-minded class to which she belonged. She had longed for a wider view of the world, and at last persuaded her father to send her to Paris to cultivate her talent for art. She spent two years in the city, two years during which a romance was enacted. She fell in love with a young French artist, but after a short engagement the tie was severed. Ferrars senior would not consent to the marriage, and the young artist, Armand Sylvain, could not marry without it; that is, without financial aid. They parted without rancor; Armand Sylvain had cloaked his cowardice and comparative indifference under the guise of chivalrous sacrifice, and Jane Ferrars had been too proud to scrutinize these chivalrous motives closely. Soon after she returned to Manchester, every feeling of her soul crushed save her



self-respect. Her position in her father's house was uncomfortably changed, especially when her brother, after a brilliant *début* in Parliament, married the daughter of the Earl of Fenniston, Lady Emily St. Clair.

The latter, it is true, always showed her sister-in-law the warmest sympathy, but Jane's brother constantly became more unkind.

Their father had now given up business entirely and retired to the magnificent estate of Westburne. Here Lady Emily did the honors as hostess; poor Jane was continually forced farther into the background. At last, merely to get out of the way, she married the first respectable man who offered himself to her, a widower, the father of two children, to whom she filled a mother's place. His name was James Winter, and he was a thoroughly decorous, uninteresting representative of that English middle class which is forever repressed, forever abashed, forever struggling, yet forever dreading to be caught in the act of this strife, the class with which Jane was wholly out of sympathy, and from which she had tried several years before to escape to Paris.

She had never had a single thought in common with her husband; she rarely spoke to him, but she kept his home in order, saw that his meals were punctually served, and directed, as well as she could, the education of his children.

Jane Ferrars, once so gay and full of life, now belonged, through her marriage, to the world where people are bored.



Her life diverged more and more from her brother's. But every year they spent a few weeks together under the same roof,—the roof of the remodelled manor-house in South Oxfordshire.

So it happened that Jack had played croquet with his little step-cousin, Mary Winter, on the lawn in front of the long plate-glass windows.

While driving in his hansom past an endless row of chocolate-colored architecture towards his Aunt Jane's residence in Putney, he was thinking of those old days.

He saw his grandfather so distinctly that he could have touched him, a raw-boned, thin old man, with a deeply-lined red face, to which his bushy white brows and closely-cut white beard—he wore his upper lip smooth—formed a strange contrast. He had stubby, calloused hands, to which grime seemed to cling, no matter how often he washed them; he had never learned to use the letter H properly, and while eating always thrust his knife into his mouth. Every servant in the manor was more at ease in it than the old man to whom the house belonged. He always appeared like some stranger who had wandered there by accident; he always felt that he was one. He was under constraint with his servants, with his guests, nay, even with his own children, and, though he felt an earnest desire to have them beneath his roof as often and as long as possible, he avoided them as much as he could. With bowed head and hands clasped behind his back, he used to walk up and down some secluded avenue in his park, muttering to himself and apparently



wondering why his hard-earned wealth did not afford him the pleasure he had anticipated. When speaking to any of his family his manner was imperious and irritable, while his glance was timid and distrustful.

When little Jack, weary of playing and shouting, lay at night in his little cool, white bed, he often puzzled over the problem of his grandfather's eccentricities. Why was his grandfather Ferrars so different from Jack's other grandfather, the Earl of Fenniston?

Yet one day he struck up a friendship with this curious grandfather who abused the letter H and always ate with his knife.

The old gentleman had taken a great fancy to the merry, brown-haired boy,—a fancy which was touchingly displayed in many clumsy ways. He often made him little presents, slipped a shilling into his hand and then looked hastily in another direction.

When Jackie was playing croquet with his brother and his cousin, the old man would stand near the ground, with his legs very far apart and his face full of anxiety, watching the game, but his eyes constantly rested on Jack. Once Jack went up to him and asked if he didn't want to play too. The old gentleman appeared so astonished by the child's unexpected advance that his hands actually trembled. "No, no,—thank you, my boy; thank you, my dear!" he stammered, and went away.

Another time Jack saw him sitting alone on a



bench under an old elm, with one heavy hand resting on each knee. Jack nestled close to him, said several pleasant things, and finally sat down by his side and tried to entertain him as well as he could. But suddenly, with the artless rudeness of children, he pointed to the old gentleman's hands and asked in a low, almost solemn tone, as if expecting the revelation of some mysterious secret, "Grandpapa, why are your hands always black?"

The old man started, looked intently at the hands to which the boy had just pointed, as if his attention was directed to some new discovery, then hid them in his pockets. But when Jack, who instantly perceived that he had made a blunder, climbed on his knees and hugged him, his red face twitched. Drawing out the big hand which he had just concealed because he was ashamed that it must bear the stamp of hard labor so long as he lived, he spread the boy's little delicate one out on its horny palm, and said,—

"I have made my hands black so that you can keep yours white, Jackie."

Jackie did not understand the words then, but they made a deep impression on his heart, and from that hour he was his grandfather's loyal friend.

Unfortunately, the old gentleman could not bear his idle life long. Less than six years after he retired from business he died, though the physician could find no disease except complete decline of all his vital forces. Jack's father was now sole master of the big house with the long plate-glass windows on the lower floor. Various tasteful altera-



tions were made in the splendid mansion; it was restored to an appearance of antiquity with as much zeal as Jeremiah Ferrars had displayed in rendering it new. The changes unquestionably improved it, and the guests who, after the decorous time of mourning had expired, gathered to enjoy the comforts of Westburne Hall and admire its newly-acquired art-treasures, were far gayer and more agreeable than those who had visited Grandfather Ferrars. But Jackie often thought of the poor old man with sincere sorrow, and said to himself, "He made his hands black so that we could keep ours white."

Once, when there was an unusually gay party and the broad avenue in front of the castle flamed with huntsmen in scarlet coats, mounted on blooded horses whose sleek sides shone like satin, Jackie suddenly felt so sad that he could scarcely restrain his tears. It seemed as if the whole brilliant company was rejoicing because his poor, rich grandfather was dead.

Meanwhile, as a reward for his distinguished political career, to which his father's wealth formed an admirable setting, Lady Emily St. Clair's husband was made a baronet. He was now Sir John Ferrars, and commissioned an expert in heraldry to find him an authentic genealogical tree. This agent brought to light some very remarkable things concerning the past history of the Ferrars family.

Jack was reared exclusively in aristocratic circles, but nevertheless always maintained his relations with his Aunt Jane. He wrote long letters to her



from Eton, and, when he went later to the University at Oxford, of course entering Christ Church College, he even did the honors of the picturesque old town for two days to his aunt and cousins. Yet, spite of his efforts, he always felt that he was a stranger to the two girls. With his aunt the case was very different; he always cherished for her the tender sympathy which kindred souls preserve, notwithstanding all barriers of time and space.

Whenever they met he was sincerely delighted, and treated her with the tenderness of a son. But he saw her more and more rarely, and during the past few years had thought of her step-daughters so seldom that to-day, while driving to Ivy Lodge with matrimonial intentions, he really did not know whether Mary Winter's hair was black, red, brown, or golden.

A loud altercation which arose between his own driver and another cabby concerning a wrong turn roused Jack from his reveries. He looked out and perceived that London, the real London, was already behind him. Instead of the long, monotonous rows of chocolate-colored houses, the architecture of these residences was diversified by all sorts of picturesque caprices.

The houses no longer stood close together, but were surrounded by fresh, leafy gardens. Lofty ash- and elm-trees towered into the damp, gray air above the ancient gable-roofs. Immense rhododendron hedges, bearing clumps of pale lilac blossoms, grew between them. A stretch of pas-



ture-land bordered one side of the street; then came a Gothic church with stiff, gloomy arches; then gardens, more gardens, and finally more specimens of architectural caprices, usually in the Elizabethan style.

Gr-rr. The cab stopped before Ivy Lodge, the house which Mrs. Winter had occupied since the death of her husband, a year before.

“So this is Putney?” murmured Jack, as his eyes wandered over the gardens and the lofty roofs, most of which were covered with semicircular tiles. “Extremely unfashionable, but pretty. I have a strong liking for Putney.”

He nodded encouragingly, as if begging the whole suburb not to feel the least embarrassment because so great a gentleman had wandered there. He scanned everything with a tourist’s curiosity. Paris, Calcutta, and San Francisco were familiar scenes to him, but he had never been in Putney. Wimbledon Common was a discovery. He had never visited his aunt here.

A surly old servant opened the door of the hall. An odor of hot oil-cloth and mutton-broth greeted him. His liking for Putney diminished. He had an aversion to mutton-broth and oil-cloth. When he asked if the ladies were at home the man hesitated. At last he answered, “Yes, but——”

Jack handed him his card, and told him to take it to his mistress and let him know whether she would receive him. He had no doubts on that score.



Yet what did the servant's "but" mean? Was one of his cousins engaged? And had her fiancé just arrived?

He was beginning to feel annoyed, when the door opened and the man asked him to walk into the drawing-room.

This was a long, comparatively low apartment, with a very light paper and furniture covered in the same hues. The windows extended to the floor and looked out upon a velvet lawn, which reminded Jack, like a miniature edition, of the broad expanse of turf before the Oxfordshire house where he had played croquet with his cousins in his childhood. A weeping-ash, whose branches trailed on the ground and cast a broad, tremulous shadow on the short grass, stood on this little lawn.

Before the hearth, on which a small wood-fire was burning, sat an elderly lady with bands of hair brushed smoothly over her ears beneath a small black cap bordered with white, the becoming widow's costume of Englishwomen. Her black dress, trimmed with crêpe, fell around her in graceful folds. A small low tea-table stood at her side, and behind her was a Japanese umbrella.

What a charming picture! Jack thought. He was genuinely glad to see his aunt again. In spite of her feminine charm, the quiet, unassuming charm of an old woman who has forgotten life's fever and for whom selfish vanities no longer exist, she reminded him of the grandfather with the black hands. Hers were very white, and her face was far more delicate and beautiful than the old



gentleman's had ever been, yet her features revealed traces of the keen, simple intelligence which had enabled him to hew out his own career,—the unbroken vigor of feeling which he had retained to his life's end. Only her dark-brown eyes sometimes sparkled with an almost playful mirth which was wholly alien to old Ferrars's temperament, and which his daughter had probably inherited from the beautiful Irish mother who, as we know, was only a washerwoman.

She looked up pleasantly as Jack entered, and a faint flush tinged her cheeks, the flush any sudden emotion causes in delicate elderly women.

"Is it really you?" she exclaimed. "I could scarcely believe my eyes when I read your name on the card Smith handed to me. I thought it must be some other Jack Ferrars." Her voice was hoarse and slightly tremulous, but expressed touching, though carefully-repressed joy. The young man hastily approached and raised her hand to his lips.

"What made you remember us again so suddenly, you young scapegrace?" she exclaimed.

Jack, whose knowledge of the true motive of his visit, the pursuit of a wife, began to weigh heavily on his heart, became somewhat confused; then utterly forgetting all his evil designs, he threw himself into a low chair at the old lady's feet, exclaiming, "Ah, auntie, don't ask me; show a little pleasure that I am here."

"Indeed I will!" replied Mrs. Winter. Then, putting both hands on the young man's shoulders,



she gazed at him with joyful pride, the joy with which an old person sees blooming young life, the pride we feel in our own flesh and blood when we behold it in a nobler, more beautiful form.

Taking his head between her hands, she kissed him and patted his cheeks. These warm, spontaneous caresses had a peculiar charm for him,—they expressed the artless love of the common people.

“Pleasure, you wicked fellow! Do you know that you have grown much handsomer since I saw you last?”

“Don’t spoil me, Aunt Jane,” he answered, gravely.

“As if that wouldn’t have happened long ago, had there been any danger of it,” replied the old lady, laughing. “But now tell me what you have been doing all this time. Will you have a cup of tea, my boy?”

“With pleasure, aunt.”

“I’ll make some fresh for you.”

Stopping his attempted protest, she said, “Let me have my own way; you must be comfortable in my house. To spoil those whom we love to our heart’s content is the greatest pleasure we old people can enjoy.”

She rang the bell, ordered the lamp under the tea-kettle to be freshly lighted, and produced from a secret drawer in her cabinet a special kind of tea brought from China by a relative and used only on extraordinary occasions.

Jack talked and laughed with the old lady, sometimes telling an anecdote bordering on doubt-



ful ground, for which she dealt him a reproving little tap, though secretly enjoying it.

Suddenly an odd idea entered Jack's mind. "Will you sit still a little while,—there,—just as you are now, aunt? I should like to sketch you as you sit,—with the flying Japanese stork in the background."

She was ready for anything. After a short search he at last found, with Smith's assistance, a pen and a sheet of paper suitable for his purpose, and set to work. The old lady watched him with a loving smile.

"It is strange what an effect you produce upon me, my boy," she said. "Have you ever noticed in the spring how the oldest wainscoting sometimes creaks and snaps? Some impulse from the great force which is making the trees outside put forth leaves steals through the dead wood, and it dreams of life. When you are with me it seems as if spring was approaching, and I, too, dream of life. What a pity that you are not my son!" she murmured.

"Well, who knows? what is not may be," he answered, looking up from his drawing with a forced laugh.

"No," she said, "that wouldn't do. My step-daughters are both excellent girls, but they don't suit you. A sunbeam barred in a cellar would symbolize your condition in a marriage with Sarah or Mary. You are a child of light and summer,—my two girls belong to darkness and winter. The clock was just striking the hour of noon when you opened your blue eyes for the first time; instead



of crying you laughed. You laughed in my face, you rogue, for I was the first to welcome your little life. I was not present when Sarah and Mary were born, but I am sure that both wailed most mournfully when they first opened their eyes in this world."

Jack sighed thoughtfully. "Turn your face a little more towards the fire, aunt," he requested; then a short time after, lifting his brows a little, he added, "Where are my cousins?"

"I am expecting them every moment," replied Mrs. Winter. "Mary drove into the city with Lady Byng to attend a Woman's Suffrage Meeting, and Sarah had something important to do in the district."

"They both lead very serious lives," Jack remarked.

The old lady shrugged her shoulders. "What can you expect?" she cried. "Both have a great deal of money and a great deal of time. Sarah has an object in life, and Mary is seeking one. It is no wonder, considering the surroundings amid which they grew up. I was too weary to labor against the oppressive influences by which they have been environed from infancy. So they have become what they are,—admirable girls, melancholy as English November weather, without a touch of cheerfulness. They are, I believe, absolutely sure that gayety, under all circumstances, is a sin. You haven't lost yours yet, have you, my boy?"

"Not up to this time," replied Jack, somewhat dispiritedly.



"Treasure it as long as possible!" cried the old lady. "You see,—say what they will,—sincere, blithe cheerfulness is the incense which must be most pleasing to our Father in heaven. I pity these melancholy devotees who worship the Deity with wailing and gnashing of teeth. They all sing out of tune, and I am certain that God must close His ears during their serenades."

"What is Sarah's object in life?" asked Jack, with some degree of curiosity.

"Sarah's object in life," she began, but she could not finish the sentence, for at the same moment a young woman in a Salvation bonnet, a black hat of peculiarly unbecoming shape, made specially for the female members of the Salvation Army, tore open the door, exclaiming, "I have succeeded in seeing the chief of police of the district; he will place an officer at my disposal next Sunday!" as she approached the couple sitting by the fire. This attractive creature was Jack's cousin Sarah.

Five minutes after the young man had learned his energetic cousin's object in life. She was toiling to rid Great Britain of drunkenness. She had taken an oath never to touch a drop of intoxicating liquor, no matter if during some period when her strong constitution was weakened a sip of wine would save her life. Now she was self-sacrificingly doing her utmost to convert her countrymen to the same abhorrence of spirituous drinks.

Last Sunday she had spent three hours in a carriage outside of the private entrance of a tavern



officially closed on account of the observance of the Sabbath, watching to catch the innocent children sent by parents who were forgetful of their duty to fetch unlawful refreshments, often in the shape of a harmless jug of beer.

"Just think, I caught no less than eighteen such little sinners!" she said to Jack, triumphantly. "I wrote down all their names and gave them to the police."

"You?" cried Jack, in horror.

"Certainly, in person! I am in correspondence with all the police officials in the district," she added, with a certain air of pride.

"That's just as you fancy," replied Jack, to whom the charms of this correspondence did not appear very alluring; "but how can you report the poor things? It's shocking."

"The reports are not directed against the children, but the parents," Sarah responded.

"But the suffering will come on the children," cried Jack. "If the poor youngsters have respectable parents, it wouldn't matter if they did fetch their little Sunday treat; if, on the contrary, they belong to miserable drunkards, as you believe, woe betide the poor things. They will be thrashed unmercifully for being caught. And the parents will get their liquor in some other way."

"Oh, my dear Jack, if a patient is to be cured of some serious disease he can rarely escape pain," said Sarah, pedagogically. "Only do not imagine that I use severity alone. I endeavor, by all sorts of innocent amusements, to lure the children to



temperance. You can be present to-day at one of the little tea-parties I give every Saturday to persuade them to join my cause."

At that moment Smith announced, "The Rev. Jessaiah Juniper."

"Ah, my colleague!" exclaimed Sarah, shaking hands with the new-comer.

Jack looked up and saw a person whose legs formed the letter X, whose hair stuck out almost horizontally around his head, like blue-black wire, and whose face was the color of a cup of black coffee into which a few drops of milk had accidentally fallen.

While approaching Mrs. Winter he first raised his eyes towards heaven, then, bowing very low, fixed them on the floor. His vest reached to his high standing collar, his coat fell to his knees; he had forgotten to remove his overshoes, and the hand not engaged in pressing his hat to his heart grasped the gnarled handle of a huge gray umbrella.

All this was no new spectacle to Jack. "The preacher to the poor in full canonicals," he said to himself. Umbrella, uplifted eyes, and overshoes were familiar objects; the only remarkable thing about this clergyman was his complexion.

"Allow me to present my nephew, Mr. Jack Ferrars," said Mrs. Winter.

Jack rose and the missionary bowed; then, turning to Sarah, he asked, still pressing his hat to his heart, "Has our congregation assembled?"

"No, not yet; but I am expecting the children every minute. If you will excuse me I will attend



to the final preparations. Meanwhile you can entertain mamma."

"We're in for it," murmured Mrs. Winter, who seemed by no means pleased by this interruption of her conversation with her favorite nephew, and Jack glanced in the direction of his hat. "Don't leave me in this strait," she whispered, with humorous energy. So he remained, not solely on his aunt's account, but because he suddenly recollected that his visit to Ivy Lodge was really for an important purpose, and if he went away with his object unaccomplished, he would scarcely determine to go to Putney for a wife a second time. True, if Mary should bear the least resemblance to Sarah—he smiled grimly.

As Jack and Mrs. Winter remained silent, the Rev. Jessaiah Juniper felt obliged to sustain the conversation alone.

Half charlatan, half blockhead, he uttered with great complacency a series of religious platitudes, which fell from his lips one after another with the monotonous regularity of the grain flowing from a threshing-machine.

This kind of obtrusive liberality with current religious wares was as familiar to Jack as the reverend gentleman's umbrella, uplifted eyes, and overshoes. He still discovered nothing unusual in the clergyman except his complexion and peculiar type of countenance.

Half mechanically he began to sketch beside the old lady's likeness the grotesque figure of the black enigma. Jessaiah Juniper, who, endowed with the



quickness and sagacity of a savage, instantly perceived Jack's intention, far from taking offence at it, stretched his black neck out of his stiff shirt-collar and assumed an effective pose. When Jack, greatly amused, laid down the pen with a courteous bow, the other, almost vexed, exclaimed, "Pray don't be disconcerted; I am accustomed to attract attention, my dear young friend. A photograph of me exhibited in Regent Street was more in demand for a time than those of Mr. Gladstone and Sara Bernhardt. I am one of the celebrities of London. Oh, my dear young friend, have you never heard of the African missionary in the East End of London, the poor negro who came from the wilderness to remind the white men in the midst of civilization of the God whom they had forgotten?"

The dear young friend answered, with praiseworthy gravity, "I had never heard of him, but I am very glad to make his acquaintance, and, if you will really allow me——" While speaking he had taken up the pen, and now requested the African emissary from heaven to turn his head a little to the right, but to put himself under no further inconvenience; he might talk as much as he chose, he, Jack, would listen with the utmost attention.

The missionary smiled unctuously; then, clasping and unclasping his black hands, he began in a sing-song voice,—

"It would certainly interest you to learn something of my personality, some details of my life, I mean."



“Oh, extremely!” Jack protested, with genuine earnestness, sketching on zealously.

With the automatic gestures and mechanical monotony of a child-wonder or museum phenomenon relating his biography, the missionary began: “I first saw the light of the world in New Orleans, a slave among slaves. From my earliest childhood I was remarkable for the excellence of my behavior and the rapid development of my intellect. My father was a negro, my mother a quadroon; from her I inherited the few drops of white blood which destroyed the purity of my black parentage. These drops of white blood are the sore spot in my life; I am ashamed of them, for my heart throbs solely for Africa! Although my master, perceiving my unusual talents, had me taught reading and writing, as well as other branches of useful knowledge, and never wearied of trying to win my affection by lavishing upon me all sorts of indulgences withheld from the other slaves, I never ceased to long for Africa. My love for my ancestral country touched my master, and one day, after having unintentionally flogged two drunken slaves to death, he gave me my liberty. I was educated to be a missionary, and when a young man of four-and-twenty I reached the goal of my longings,—the land of my forefathers,—Sierra Leone. I wished to diffuse among my countrymen the light with which my own soul was filled. But—oh, shame!—I resembled my own people too much to make any impression on them. To awe people you must be unlike them; note that, my dear young friend.



Alas!" In the midst of his sing-song recital he turned his head towards Jack's sketch. "Very good,—an excellent likeness!" he exclaimed, "but the hair is too short. I set great value on my hair, for I owe to my long hair and black face my present magnificent sphere of activity among the poor of London. But to resume the thread of my story. As it became more and more apparent that my labor in Africa was fruitless, and besides I could not bear the climate of my adored home, my friends persuaded me to move to London. Here—perhaps I may be permitted to say it—I have become in my modest way a personage,—the missionary from Africa! People who for years have been deaf to the 'Word' come to hear it from my lips. They come to look at my long hair and my black face, and then I talk to them of Jesus."

The Rev. Jessaiah Juniper extended his arms into vacancy as if longing to embrace all mankind, then turning from his universal philanthropy to address himself specially to Jack, he said,—

"Would you like to have my photograph, my dear young friend? Perhaps, in many of life's trying experiences, it may be important to you to remember this hour,—the conversation with the son of the wilderness, who came from Africa to bring light to the barbarians of civilization. Here is the picture." The missionary from Africa drew it from his breast-pocket, and continued: "It was taken by the same photographer who executed Mr. Gladstone's. Here, my esteemed young friend." With these words, Juniper handed Jack the photograph.



Mrs. Winter had shrugged her shoulders impatiently several times, now she yawned openly. Juniper's repertoire was small; the speech just addressed to Jack, and in which, besides the conceited phrases of his own invention, he had coolly incorporated many a sentence from newspaper articles, without further preparation or adaptation, he delivered with the same complacency to every one whom he met for the first time. Mrs. Winter knew every word of it by heart. Jack, however, to whom this piece of rhetorical art-work was new, felt no little amusement. Even in London he had never before encountered such a paragon of self-satisfied charlatanism and artless hypocrisy.

"I am deeply obliged to you for this token of your favor," he said, bowing to Juniper, with so exact an imitation of the tone and emphasis of the missionary from Africa that Mrs. Winter was obliged to bite her lips to refrain from laughing. "But the value of this memento would be infinitely enhanced to me if you would kindly add your autograph."

Jessaiah Juniper's thick lips curled in a gratified smile; then approaching the little table where Jack had been sketching, he dipped a pen into the ink, sat down, and propping both elbows on the table, almost rested his head on his left arm as he traced slowly on the back of the card, with the clumsy precision of a man who has learned to write late in life,—

"All for Jesus and Africa!

"Jessaïha Juniper."



Jack received the little picture with a low bow and put it in his pocket. "You have done me a great honor, Mr. Juniper."

"Oh, pray don't speak of it," replied the missionary, modestly disclaiming the young man's gratitude. "I am always only too glad to meet any one who is interested in Jesus and Africa. Jesus and Africa!" He pronounced the last words in sing-song tones, making the final syllable of the word "Africa" sound very loud.

Jack, who was obliged to add a few more strokes to his sketch of Juniper to complete the likeness, scanned his face closely.

Juniper, who seemed to have lapsed into a state of mild ecstasy, now beat the air with both hands like a person practising the movements of swimming on dry land, and sang,—

"Let's steal away to Jesus,  
Let's steal away to Jesus;  
For he's a jolly good fellow,  
For he's a jolly good fellow."

The pencil in Jack's hand stopped, his gaze rested intently on Juniper's black face. He would have made any wager that he had seen Juniper somewhere before, and—— But ere he could fix the vague memory Sarah entered, exclaiming, with sparkling eyes, "If you please, Mr. Juniper, everything is ready!"

Jessaiah Juniper rose and obeyed the summons.

"If you want to see the performance, follow them," said Mrs. Winter.

Jack went to see the performance.



In a large room which Sarah had had built at her own expense, at the rear of the house, about fifty children, with anxious, expectant faces, were sitting in rows on varnished yellow benches. All were neat and clean, some exquisitely pretty, so that Jack felt an almost unconquerable desire to pat their cheeks.

Any such expression of tender feeling, however, was prohibited by the scene now before him.

On a platform covered with scarlet cloth stood an old black piano, at which sat a young man with long, stiff, light hair, who instantly began to play, passing from one minor key to another. At the other end of the platform were two huge, straight-backed chairs, in which sat, like monarchs awaiting coronation, Sarah Winter and Jessaiah Juniper.

The apartment was adorned with huge placards, on which, against an effectively gloomy background, jagged tongues of flame stood forth in sharp relief,—the fiery sea of hell in which luckless human bodies writhed in horrible contortions. These attractive and cheerful works of art were embellished with the following sentences, executed in huge scarlet letters: “Where shall I go after death?”—“Utter annihilation”—“Eternal torture”—“My own doing,” etc. Jack noticed that the youth at the piano gazed steadily up from the keys at these edifying wall frescos with a very enthusiastic expression. As Jack afterwards learned, he was a house-painter in whom Sarah had discovered a great genius, and who had, by her orders, executed these frightful decorations. Jack sat



down on one of the yellow benches beside a little girl with big blue eyes and long fair hair, who was busied in soothing her younger brother. He had begun to whimper before the commencement of the ceremonies.

The pianist on the platform—his name was Abraham Bray—suddenly struck a crashing accord amid his wailing modulations, and in a hoarse voice began Beethoven's penitential hymn. Sarah and Juniper joined in, each singing false, and the children on the benches trembled. At the close of the hymn the pianist, to subdue his luckless little audience completely, executed a funeral march, after which Sarah rose, and approaching the edge of the platform, read aloud a short address, evidently composed by herself, in which she showed to her poor little listeners by all sorts of harrowing illustrations the terrible consequences of drinking.

A few of the frightened urchins were already beginning to wail softly. The sobs cut Jack to the quick, but the expression of Sarah's face showed that she regarded them as an evidence of her success, for she continued with redoubled energy her cruel explanation of the earthly consequences of the sin of intoxication. When she closed, Jessaiah Juniper came forward, and, in a very effective lecture, graphically described to the children the eternal damnation which, in the other world, must inevitably be added to the earthly punishment of drunkenness. His black figure was vividly relieved against the scarlet drapery of



the platform; he clinched his fists, gnashed his white teeth, stamped his feet, shrieked and sang by turns, while his hair, as if stirred by a current of electricity, stood out straight around his head.

The children thrust their little fists into their eyes to shut out the sight of this monster. Many of them stopped their ears, and the majority were crying bitterly. Every nerve in Jack's body quivered. Lifting one poor little fellow on his knee, he patted the embryo sinner soothingly.

Meanwhile, Juniper paused and fixed his prominent yellow-white eyes on Jack. At the same moment Sarah left the platform and approached him. "What are you doing?" she said, almost imperiously.

"I am a member of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals," he replied, apologetically, with a faint attempt to jest, pressing the head of the sobbing little one he held on his knee against his shoulder with his big warm brown hand.

"I cannot permit this!" cried Sarah, harshly; "it is against our rules to comfort the children during the addresses. My mother could not refrain from doing it, and I was obliged to request her to remain away from our meetings. Surely, you must perceive that we ought not to conceal the truth from children for the sake of sparing their nerves."

"I perceive nothing except that I can no longer witness this torture," cried Jack, angrily, as he placed the child on the floor, released the clasp of the little clinging fingers as gently as possible, and,



with his head held very high in the air, strode swiftly out of the room.

"Well, what do you think of the 'meeting'?" asked Mrs. Winter, whom he did not find in the drawing-room, but out in the garden.

"Horrible!" Jack almost shouted, his handsome blue eyes flashing angrily with an expression very unlike their usual kindly gaze. "What is the object of this torture?"

"Then you did not stay until the end?" asked Mrs. Winter.

"No!" returned Jack, tartly. "I was turned out in the middle of the African missionary's address because I had ventured to comfort a little chap about two feet high, who was trembling with fear of hell."

"I fared just the same," replied his aunt, smiling; "but you ought to have waited; the point of the enterprise is interesting."

"What is the point of the enterprise?" growled Jack.

"After the children have been duly affected by various onslaughts upon their nerves, a document is read aloud which binds them not to touch a drop of spirituous liquor all their lives. They all sign it of course. How could the poor frightened little things do otherwise? Then they are received into an organization which, under the name of 'The Bands of Hope,' is expected to secure England's future."

"And then?" murmured Jack, still dissatisfied.

"Why, then the children are left to me," replied



Mrs. Winter, "and I am permitted, as a reward for their good resolutions, to give them some refreshments. Consequently they go home with tolerably bright eyes." The old lady's smile was not free from a shade of sadness; then wiping her beautiful blue Irish eyes,—Jack's were just like them,—she added: "Drunkenness is certainly a terrible vice and evil in our country, but I should be glad if Sarah would try to contend against it by less absurd and commonplace means. Heigh-ho! Well, let us think of pleasanter subjects. I'll have the children's tea served in the garden to-day. Won't you help me amuse them a little?"

"Unfortunately, I can't stay so long," Jack answered, somewhat absently. "Hasn't Mary returned yet?" he added, in a half-irritated tone.

"No, but I am expecting her every minute," said Mrs. Winter; "she was to be at home at five."

"I suppose she is just seeking, as you say, her object in life!" Jack exclaimed. "In what direction, if one may ask?"

"Oh, she changes, usually following the lead of some shrewder and more earnest friend. At present she is struggling with Lady Byng for the cause of Woman's Suffrage in England. She is very pretty and ladylike; perhaps sets a little too much value on external superiority."

"Ah, then she is probably seeking her life-purpose in the direction of external distinction?" said Jack, derisively.

The old lady laid her hand, which, though anything but aristocratic in its contours, was soft and



warm, upon his arm, and answered, coaxingly, "Don't abuse my girls to me."

"Why are they not a little more like you!" groaned Jack, giving the coarse gravel on the garden path so violent a kick that a whole shower of tiny black pebbles flew into the air. "You are not satisfied with them yourself."

"That isn't the right word. I haven't the least cause to be dissatisfied. I pity the poor things; that's all," said Mrs. Winter.

"But why do you allow them to commit these follies?" retorted Jack, hotly.

"Because without them they would die of ennui," Mrs. Winter explained. "My dear Jack, in our circle,—the circle of the upper middle class,—the heart of the nation, as the newspapers call it, life in England is so wearisome that it needs my Irish blood to bear it without some monomania, a so-called 'object in life.' Every woman in the English middle class has an aim: one labors against drunkenness, another in behalf of improved sanitary arrangements in hospitals, or the betterment of canalization in the suburbs of London, a third delivers lectures on the modern idea of Christianity, and shows you that revelation was unnecessary to prove the existence of Deity, and still another toils for the abolition of the corset and the introduction of the Greek peplos for woman's daily wear. Yes, I assure you the whole circle of the English middle classes seems to me like a huge circus, where every woman rides her own hobby, and oh, dear, with what zeal and



earnestness! The men have less time for such follies: they have something to do; but how else can the women employ their leisure? There is no work for them in their homes, they are tended and pampered like princesses,—everything is theirs except healthful pastime.”

“But I don’t understand why you have permitted them to vegetate in this circle?” Jack vehemently exclaimed, snapping little twigs from the bushes which shaded the path, down which he was walking with his aunt.

“What was I to do? It happened so,” said the old lady, carelessly. “Your mother was a charming woman, and we were very fond of each other; but she really did not know what to do with me except when she was ill. And when she died all intercourse between us and your father gradually ceased. Your father was a terribly ambitious man, who never forgave me for having once accidentally spoken to his wife of our mother, who, as you perhaps know, was a washerwoman.”

“Yes, I know,” Jack nodded; “it’s the sore spot in Bryan’s life, too. When I want to tease him I always bring it up; he’s just like his father.”

“My girls would be still less suited to your gay world than I. They both have their father’s Puritan blood in their veins.” Her eyes grew fixed and dreamy, as is the wont of old people who suddenly, instead of looking to the future, glance back into the past. “Your uncle Christopher was a man of honor,” she said. “I have no occasion to complain of him,—he was a pattern husband.” Clasp-



her hands, she stretched both arms into vacancy. "Well, I did my duty honestly; but the ennui I endured during my married life is beyond description. You are the first person to whom I ever admitted it, and—my step-daughters are exactly like their father. But Mary is pretty,—you'll be pleased with her. The only thing she lacks—but there she is."

A young girl was coming down the narrow path. Her figure was somewhat above the middle height, with a very long, rather flat waist, and hips which sloped somewhat too sharply; smoothly-brushed brown hair framed a face whose only objectionable feature was a mouth with slightly projecting teeth. She had removed her hat before leaving the house, and wore her hair gathered with tasteful simplicity into a knot at the nape of the neck and brushed plainly, without any fashionable crimps over the pure white brow; her brown eyes gazed forth with a frank, clear look from beneath the delicate curves of the eyebrows; face, bearing, dress,—a gray linen gown with black ribbons,—were thoroughly charming and ladylike.

"Why, she is lovely!" Jack said to himself, watching her with a thrill of emotion.

Meanwhile his glance met the young girl's. She recognized him and flushed crimson, which was extremely becoming.

"She is certainly pretty, very pretty," Jack thought, with increasing satisfaction, and, approaching her with a more rapid step, mentally added, "She is bewitching."



“How do you do, Mary?” he cried, in his winning, cordial tones, holding out his hand. But the blush had instantly faded and she was again pale and formal. Barely placing the tips of her fingers in his outstretched hand, she answered, in a low, monotonous voice, wholly devoid of modulation,—

“Oh, thank you, I am very well; and how are you?”

The voice alone was sufficient to hurl Jack from his heaven; it was like a person softly yet sharply striking the same note constantly on a piano. No, she was neither bewitching nor charming: she was simply an English girl cut out precisely according to the prescribed pattern.

“Well, did you have any success at your meeting?” he asked, after a pause; it suddenly seemed very difficult to talk with his cousin.

“Oh, there is no question of success yet,” she replied, in the same monotonous staccato. “We cannot expect any immediate result, but we must do our duty.”

“H’m! And do you consider it your duty to lecture on the subject of woman’s suffrage?” muttered Jack.

“I have made it the purpose of my life to help my enslaved sex to secure liberty,” replied Mary, but the heroic words sounded as tame and listless as if she had made a remark about the state of the weather.

“Couldn’t you devote yourself to some object nearer home?” asked Jack Ferrars, not without a shade of sarcasm.



"What do you mean?" replied Mary, somewhat uneasily, raising her brown eyes hastily to his, and then instantly fixing them on the ground again.

"Why, making yourself useful in your own house and your relatives happy!" Jack exclaimed, angrily.

"I don't neglect my domestic duties," Mary hurriedly answered. Her articulation had become a shade quicker, but she lapsed into her former tone as she added, "I take the whole charge of the housekeeping, and settle the accounts with the cook every evening."

"Yes, she is a very exact arithmetician," said Mrs. Winter, encouragingly; she had hitherto listened silently to the lagging conversation between the two young people, and she kindly patted her daughter's long, thin arm as she spoke. Mary received the caress with a slight twitch, like a person who is both shy and ticklish. The movement did not escape Jack's notice.

No, compared with Mary, even Sarah was amusing. He instantly changed his tone, which at first had been somewhat questioning, as if seeking something more beneath the shell of her insipidity, and talked of superficial matters.

"This weeping-ash is a very beautiful tree."

"Oh, yes, very fine indeed," fell from her lips.

"It's strange how early the rhododendrons blossom this year."

"Astonishing, isn't it——"

At this moment a harsh, rhythmical noise, which was perhaps intended to represent a triumphal



march, echoed through the garden, announcing that the "cruelty to animals" was over.

The lawn suddenly filled with tearful children. Mrs. Winter expressed a hope that Jack would help her cheer the little band, but he repeated that he could not stay longer. In truth, there was no cause to prolong his visit. The matter was ended for him.

What more could he do here?

He had already taken leave of his cousins, and now returned with his aunt to the drawing-room, where he had had his tea with her.

The old lady fixed an earnest, searching gaze upon him. "What really did induce you to seek us again?" she asked.

Jack's ears burned as though some one had lashed his head with stinging nettles.

"I came to bid you farewell," he muttered, hurriedly.

"Farewell? Are you going to India to hunt tigers, or to the Cordilleras to pursue some other game?"

"Scarcely so far, aunt, and not for amusement," Jack answered, gloomily; "I am merely obliged to leave England because it is too expensive to live here. I am ruined."

"Ruined!" cried the terrified old lady.

"Yes!" Jack smiled faintly, in the way with which every man who has any pretensions to good-breeding seeks to cloak his suffering. "My brother communicated the fact to me this morning. By careful investment of the property still left me I



shall have an annual income of three hundred pounds."

"Oh, my poor boy! what are you to do?" cried Mrs. Winter, deeply troubled.

"Hush, hush, Aunt Jane, don't pity me; it was all my own fault," answered Jack, much moved.

"As if that were any reason for not pitying any one!" cried Mrs. Winter, her blue Irish eyes glittering with tears. "But what do you mean to do now, you spoiled, helpless mortal?"

"Bryan wished me to take orders, as he can then promise me a living. I myself——"

"Well, what have you yourself planned?"

Jack's ears were still burning; he made no answer save a shrug of the shoulders. After a brief, awkward pause, he glanced around as though he had forgotten something.

"What is it?" asked Mrs. Winter.

"The sketch I made of you; I should like to keep it for a remembrance," replied Jack.

The old lady found the sheet; but before giving it to her nephew, she remarked, "Strange, how excellent the likeness is! You have a great deal of talent, Jack."

"Do you think so?" he answered, thoughtfully; then added: "Now, just this very moment, the idea entered my mind, perhaps if I cultivated this talent I might earn something by it."

"I don't doubt that," Mrs. Winter said, earnestly, "if you have the necessary perseverance."

"The perseverance will come of its own accord



from my narrow purse," said Jack, in a jesting tone.

"H'm! It is worth considering," murmured Mrs. Winter. "Where would you study?"

"Where can art be studied?" asked Jack. "Only in Paris."

"H'm!" Again Aunt Jane's eyes grew fixed. She was gazing far back into the past, farther than when she had spoken to Jack of her married life. "When would you start?"

"Within a few days. As soon as I have settled my troublesome business affairs."

"Well,—if you carry out the plan,—if you really do go to Paris to become an artist, let me know before your departure. I should like to give you a letter of introduction to an old friend. True, since I last saw him, he has become a very famous man, but I think he will remember me. Farewell, my boy. God bless you. Your visit has afforded me great pleasure."



## II.

JACK entered the hansom which—economy was not yet familiar to him—he had kept waiting during his call.

A sweet fragrance floated over the red brick walls of the gardens. The recollection of his pretty, stylish, yet infinitely tiresome cousin haunted him with tenacious persistency. What did she lack?—what was it? Good heavens, it was life!

Suddenly a legion of equally attractive, well-bred, tiresome creatures appeared before his mental vision, all alike devoid of animation.

“It is undeniably a national fault,” Jack said to himself, and while pondering over the matter it seemed to him that his countrymen were ashamed of genuine life,—their movements, their way of speaking, their opinions, everything was in a certain degree mechanical. They had a national physiognomy, but no individuality. In their fear that life might make some objectionable demand upon them they so repressed and denied it that they actually appeared to pride themselves upon being automata, set in motion by a certain universal agreement as to manners and customs, instead of human creatures. When these blinded mortals at last succeeded in wholly extirpating all tokens



of vivacity, they triumphed in the consciousness of their magnificent perfection, and looked down upon all less inanimate persons with insolent scorn.

Amid this union of the saints vivacity was considered—sin. The comical part of it was that this maltreated vivacity fettered by cant—the name of the great, decorous lie—constantly asserted its rights, and in what a vehement fashion!

True, he had never noticed this national evil so plainly as to-day. He asked himself whether matters were very different in the circles where he had formerly moved, in the world of gayety. But the answer was not quite so prompt. A certain stiff lifelessness characterized his countrymen, even in “society,” notwithstanding their more easy and affable manners.

Genuine vivacity was displayed—especially by his *countrywomen*—only when their blood was stirred by some exciting incident of sport, or by some momentarily strong interest awakened by it.

Sport was the only thing which roused Englishwomen, and, moreover, the great safety-valve which saved them from the ugly sins by which, even in the best society, the natural gayety repressed by cant only too frequently found an outlet.

Sport! sport! ay, under the influence of sport Englishwomen become gay, charming, unaffected. Jack involuntarily uttered a sigh of relief at the thought of the effect it produced, and at the same time cast a glance around him. The neighborhood suddenly seemed strangely familiar. He thrust his head out from under the roof of his cab;



a couple of drags drawn by four horses rolled past him and he recognized several intimate friends, who waved their hands gayly. "Where am I?" he said to himself. "Surely this must be somewhere near Hurlingham."

On the way to Putney he had been so absorbed in the evil designs which had brought him thus *ex abrupto* to his shamefully-neglected relatives, that he had paid no heed to his surroundings. Now his lips curled in a humorous smile. He had had no idea that in London, or at least in its immediate neighborhood, the world of boredom lay so near the world of amusement.

And how much pleasure Hurlingham offered! Jack could not restrain a little sigh of regret as he thought of the magnificent park where every Saturday, during the season, the polo matches were played. How often he had taken part in them! He was, of course, a member of the Hurlingham Club. A sudden fancy took possession of him to have one more glimpse of this paradise of sport, which had now become to him indeed a *Paradise Lost*.

He ordered the cabman to drive to Hurlingham.

As hired conveyances, with the exception of coaches, are not admitted to these Elysian Fields of the utmost aristocratic exclusiveness, the hansom was obliged to stop at the entrance. Jack then remembered that he did not have his ticket of admission with him, but the one-armed porter made no difficulty on that score. He was well known in Hurlingham.

People had not yet begun to leave. The equi-



pages which had conveyed the fashionable world hither still stood side by side, a veritable rampart of carriages. Drags, elegant two-seated victorias, clumsy old-fashioned coaches, with coachmen in wigs on the box, and powdered footmen, with long gilt canes, standing on a footboard behind.

Jack knew all the most elegant of these equipages. Silent and amused with that sense of humor springing from the feeling of decorum which will not suffer men to acknowledge their depression, even to themselves, Jack pondered over the mutability of everything earthly while strolling along the exquisitely-kept paths winding between broad stretches of velvety turf, across which, lightly stirred by the breath of the late spring, the picturesque, flickering shadows of the ancient ashes and elms grew longer and longer. Now and then a brake or a mail-coach rolled by him at the slow pace of a vehicle waiting for its owners.

He went to the place where the polo matches were held. A number of the most beautiful women, as well as the most elegant old and young dudes of London, surrounded the enclosure, behind which eight young men in white flannel suits and yellow kid gaiters, their arms bared above the elbow, were dashing hither and thither on broad-shouldered white ponies over the emerald sward in pursuit of a white ball, which both sides tried to secure by means of long-handled sticks resembling croquet-mallets. The ball flew here and there, the spectators breathlessly watching its movements and those of the players.



A band of genuine Hungarian musicians was playing in lulling rhythm one of Strauss's waltzes, a caressing accompaniment to the whispered duets of love filling the soft spring air.

Old ladies sat in gay little tents, real English old ladies, extremely stout, attired in very youthful costumes, with faces whose outlines were beautiful in form, but unfortunately marred by blotched complexions. They laughingly listened to complimentary speeches from white-haired admirers, which recalled long-past triumphs as they protested for the hundredth time that the women of the present day were by no means so beautiful as those who had made the rain and sunshine of the social sky of London thirty or forty years ago.

Jack, catching these remarks, was asking himself in the presence of the exquisite array of feminine loveliness on which his eyes rested whether this was possible.

A feeling of melancholy pleasure stole over him. He enjoyed the music, enjoyed the soft air fragrant with the scent of the green leafage and damp turf, the sight of the pretty young women and the aristocratic old ones, the aroma of the quintessence of aristocracy in which a small contingent of successful place-hunters formed an amusing rather than an annoying element.

He was recognized. Beautiful eyes flashed a friendly welcome; brown hands, whose almond-shaped nails gleamed like opals, were extended by the men. But Jack did not linger long, and, turning away again, strolled alone through the park.



The mournful melody sung by the spring breeze sweeping over the tops of the ancient ash-trees blended with the distant music of the band, the shadows stretching across the greensward grew paler and paler,—suddenly they vanished.

It was beginning to rain,—it always begins to rain in London when one least expects it. First only a drop fell here and there, something like a louder rustle of the leaves; then they came faster, a rattling shower which made Jack seek refuge in the casino, the tiny Hurlingham casino. His way led him past the conservatory, where a number of ladies had found shelter. He saw them gazing out through the sloping glass roof over a palisade of the gayest calceolarias, and thought he had never beheld any sight more beautiful.

How tall and slender, how well formed, though usually a little flat-waisted, these young creatures were! What superb complexions, what healthful frankness of expression, and what bewitching little noses and short, exquisitely-moulded upper lips! They were Englishwomen, too.

Anger overwhelmed him, true proletarian wrath that the gulf between the world of English gayety was so deep and the wall between Putney and Hurlingham so high. It was unjust,—in no nation was the middle class so scantily, the aristocracy so richly, endowed as in England. There the aristocracy has everything, beauty, grace, intellect, and more—the charm of perfect naturalness.

After Jack had raged sufficiently concerning this unjust distribution of earthly blessings, he



calmed himself with the thought that nevertheless there was in reality no society less exclusive than the English, that every one can obtain admittance to it if he has money or power to gain access, and whether he is comfortable or not in it depends wholly upon himself.

Then he wondered if any picture could be painted like the array of lovely faces he had seen behind the calceolarias through the rain-blurred glass panes,—whether Nittis could have executed such a thing. How odd and charming it was!

Almost every one in the group wore a capote bonnet, but in all other respects the attire of his countrywomen differed most widely. Heavy dark red or violet dresses were relieved against white muslin ones, black lace gowns alternated with gay China silks, natty cloth costumes, and white flannel lawn-tennis suits, or creations of Worth, Redfern, and Elise, becoming even in the most eccentric variations from the fashion.

At last Jack succeeded in turning his eyes away from the pretty medley of colors, entered the tea-room of the casino and looked for a newspaper, but found nothing except the *Field*, a sporting paper, about two dozen copies of which were lying about. The apartment was almost empty. The only occupants were a young man and some female relatives from the country, to whom he was evidently doing the honors of Hurlingham. They were just in the act of leaving the room, and Jack heard him say as they passed out,—

“Awfully jolly, isn’t it? Well, we might have



some more books about the place." He accompanied the words, however, with a smile of satisfaction, which distinctly expressed how sincere would be his regret if the aristocratic ignorance of Hurlingham should destroy its *chic* by descending to the establishment of a library.

Jack was now left to his own thoughts, which were of no pleasant character. Suddenly a tall, slender woman, with the most charming little face framed in glittering golden hair ever shaded by an Elise capote, rushed through the door, which had been left open.

This capote really consisted merely of a wreath of pale lilac and yellow orchids, with which she wore a white dress, already quite wet, and a sable collar, which she was clinching convulsively with both hands around her neck.

"Why, Jack! is it you?" she called. The young man recognized Lady Clara, his brother's wife.

She was almost out of breath, the little curls on her forehead were a trifle disarranged, but her whole appearance was thoroughly aristocratic and full of charm. Well dressed, with instinctive refinement but not too great care, a little self-assertive, but so naïvely, with such good reason, that people gave way to her aplomb, she was one of the most fascinating representatives of a very fascinating class of people.

"Jack, you here! I saw you just a moment watching the polo, then you vanished. I have been running after you through the whole place, but couldn't find you anywhere. Charley Dearing



is looking for you, too. I've been caught in the rain; but I'm delighted to have found you at last. Oh, do order me a cup of tea!"

"Isn't it rather late?" asked Jack.

"What does the time matter?" replied his sister-in-law. "I should like to talk with you a little while. If it were not so late the room would be full of people."

Within a few minutes Jack was sitting opposite to his sister-in-law at a very pretty low table watching her sip her tea; she did not touch the brown Hurlingham cakes the waiter brought with it. She was only thirsty, not hungry.

Jack gazed at her with much pleasure. "An Englishwoman, too," he thought. "What a pity that Mary doesn't resemble her more!" Again a wave of proletarian wrath swept over him that these people should have everything, not only their social position and physical beauty, but their sparkling energy and bewitching naturalness, the insolent naturalness of persons thoroughly content with what God and life have made them, and who therefore consider it utterly superfluous to feign.

Affectation always has its root in a feeling of insecurity. It is the rouge people put on because their own complexions do not seem beautiful enough.

"I know all!" she exclaimed, looking at him over the edge of her teacup,—“all; Bryan has told me everything.”

"Why, what do you know?" asked Jack, lapsing into a jesting tone.



"That you are ruined, that you haven't a far-thing. You silly boy!"

"Oh, ho!" retorted Jack, "you have been misinformed. I still have a yearly income of three hundred pounds, besides the building-lots, which some day——"

"Will yield a million," interrupted Lady Clara, dryly. "We know all about that. Building-lots or family lawsuits, both serve to quiet the scruples of conscience when one is inclined to live beyond one's means. I know what I am talking about. If my family had not spent more than they could afford, on expectations from the sale of building-lots, I should not be your sister-in-law. I really ought not to have said that,—it slipped out. Besides,—h'm!—your brother can be perfectly satisfied, and his children will never have reason to be ashamed of their mother. Bryan needn't regret it. The only person who has any cause for repentance is I. Ah!"—she leaned back in her low chair, rubbing her eyes with her dainty little hands,—"the malice of fate! Two years after my marriage the value of the building-lots was realized,—an immense sum! To-day I should be one of the best matches in the kingdom. Well, never mind, I didn't come here to lament my own misfortunes, but to console you. What do you really intend to do now?"

"I—Clara—I have a plan of my own. When my business here is settled I'll go to Paris, live economically, and study art," Jack answered.

"Indeed!" Lady Clara leaned her arm on the



low tea-table which stood before her and surveyed Jack enthusiastically from head to foot. "That's a splendid idea,—you are going to be an artist!"

Jack nodded, then added, smiling, "Unless Bryan thinks I shall commit a crime against the respectability of the Ferrars family."

"Ah, let the Ferrars respectability take care of itself! An artist,—that's splendid. You have so much talent! You know I have had the portraits of my two children which you sketched for me last year in red crayon framed and hung in my bedroom. An artist,—that's splendid. You can make immense sums of money. They say that Sir John Millais earns ten thousand pounds a year."

Like the true woman she was, Lady Clara saw only the shining goal, without giving a thought to the length of the road. The problem of her brother-in-law's future was solved. "I am glad that you have thought of something sensible," she said. "Bryan was saying that you ought to marry Mary Winter. Why should you marry Mary Winter? Nonsense! Of course you are coming to dine with us to-morrow?"

"Bryan withdrew the invitation; he told me that you had invited several guests, and that your dining-room was very small," replied Jack, with the utmost seriousness.

"Yes, he said something of the kind to me," returned Lady Clara. "I explained to him that unless he invited you there would be no dinner."

"Why, Clara!"

"The comical part of it is that he is really fond



of you, only, unfortunately, he values two other things still more: his money and the respectability of the Ferrars family. He'll be very glad to see you. Come whenever you can; we want to enjoy your society a little before you leave London. And one thing more, Jack: Bryan said you meant to sell your art-treasures, and asked a thousand pounds for your 'Nymphs' by Corot. I know the picture is worth more, but if you'll let me have it at that price——"

Jack crimsoned to his forehead.

"Oh, you foolish boy!" Lady Clara laughed, pleasantly. "This is business,—mere business."

Just at that moment a very fair young man put his head in at the door,—Sir Charles Dearing.

"Awfully sorry," he cried, "but—why, there you are, Jack.—I was just going to tell you that I couldn't find the rascal anywhere, Lady Clara."

"At least it has given you some exercise," cried Lady Clara, rising. "It is growing late, very late; we must go."

They left the casino and went into the park. It was almost empty, only now and then a four-in-hand drag dashed past them towards the entrance.

Lady Clara and Jack returned to London in Sir Charles Dearing's drag.

There were other ladies in the party; the hum of gay voices surrounded Jack. Through the misty twilight now gathering the drenched foliage of the ancient ash-trees of Hurlingham glimmered phantom-like; the leaves sang and rustled.

Jack was very silent: he was reflecting. This



was England, too ! But what a small part of England ! And on looking very, very closely, even here there were traces of cant,—cant, the gigantic lie of decorum, the cold fog repressing all vivacity, which broods heavily, oppressively, over the whole British nation.

A fortnight after, on the eve of his departure, Jack sent Corot's "Nymphs" to Lady Clara as a farewell gift. The next morning, as he was entering the first-class carriage which was to convey him to Dover, his sister-in-law came towards him, leading a rosy, fair-haired child by each hand. "We have come to bid Uncle Jack good-by and wish him good luck," said Lady Clara. The young man, deeply moved, kissed them all warmly, and took with him on his journey the impression of pure, tender, loving hearts. "An Englishwoman, too !" he murmured, as the train bore him away, and he remembered the farewell addressed by Lord Byron to Miss Mercer through his friend on the eve of his departure from home : "Tell Miss Mercer that, had I been fortunate enough to marry a woman like her, I should not now be obliged to exile myself from my country."

When he went on board the "Invikta," and saw the white cliffs of old England disappear in the distance, he again drew a comparison between Lord Byron and himself. True, he would probably never write a companion poem to "Childe Harold," and, thank heaven, he left no Lady Byron behind.



From Lady Byron his thoughts roved unbidden to Mary Winter. The way was long, and he himself laughed at the direction they took. "Poor little Mary!" he murmured, "she certainly bore no resemblance to Lady Byron,—no, h'm!—no, and yet—there was a shade of kinship between them; and Mary and her sister Sarah blended into one person would give as perfect a second Lady Byron as one could desire, or rather could not desire,—stiff, exemplary, blameless, pitiless, ambitious, arrogant, pursuing the husband she loved so passionately to his very grave with repulsive slanders.

"Poor little Mary!" he murmured again, recalling her insipid insignificance. "H'm! When I think of marrying either of my cousins! Brr! I would rather caress a hedgehog than Sarah; and as to Mary, I would rather embrace—what?—a frog!"

The waves began to dash more violently against the wooden sides of the ship,—a slight feeling of discomfort stole over the young man. To conquer it, he ordered a glass of brandy and soda.

It was still broad daylight when Jack reached Paris, and the train which had conveyed him from Calais to the capital stopped with a shrill whistle in the Gare du Nord. A feeling of light-hearted cheerfulness had taken possession of him. While rushing through the gray-green flat country stretching far away till it merged into the golden mists



on the horizon, he had felt as if a heavy, oppressive burden were being gradually lifted from his shoulders.

The ruined idler felt happier than he had for many a day as he sprang out upon the asphalt of the Gare du Nord, and instinctively glanced around for his valet. "Clerks!" he called, somewhat vexed that the man did not instantly appear. Then he smiled, remembering that Clerks had been left behind with various other luxuries belonging to the extravagant life, wholly free from material cares, which he had led in England. A comical sense of helplessness overwhelmed him. Then a man in a white blouse and a cap with a square projecting brim rushed up, and touching it, said, "Milor'!"

Nodding pleasantly to him, Jack pointed to his little collection of hand-luggage, and, followed by the porter, went to the waiting-room. The huge, lofty apartment, amid whose dirty-gray monotony of color the various fruit- and book-stalls introduced a motley, cheerful alternation of gay tints, wore a homelike air. Several Frenchwomen, with crimped white caps and smooth hair, were sitting in the window-niches as usual, chatting together with eager gesticulations, and a blind beggar was blowing the "Marseillaise" on a French horn. It was really terribly trying to the nerves, but Jack thought it charming. Every pulse vibrated with pleasure, yet his face was as aristocratically devoid of expression as his countrymen could have desired.

The porter put the luggage in an open carriage, which Jack entered. After giving the man a fee,



which seemed somewhat to surprise him, he called to the driver the name of the hotel where he usually went,—“Hotel Castiglione, Rue Castiglione.”

Not until the porter asked, “Has Milor’ no trunk?” did he remember that his business was not wholly settled.

After searching a long time for his luggage-ticket, which he was not in the habit of keeping, and finally discovering it in his vest-pocket, he handed it to the Frenchman, who was secretly smiling, and when the latter asked, “Will Milor’ wait for the trunks?” Jack, amazed by the suggestion, cried, “Bring them to the hotel, and you, coachman, drive on.”

In this practical fashion Jack began the new life which henceforth was to cost him only three hundred pounds per annum. Leaning comfortably back in his shabby vehicle, he gazed at his surroundings. Was this the same world where, scarcely eight hours ago, he had been so depressed and bored? Yes, it must be the same, or, at any rate, a little corner of it,—but a corner in which a favorable climate and the gay, sanguine temperament of its inhabitants had preserved at least a portion of that cheerfulness which his poor Aunt Jane had praised as the incense which must be most pleasing to God. How everything about Jack throbbed with life!—the pulse of the universe, whose slightest independent, unconventional manifestation was considered a sin by one-tenth of the dwellers in his native land. He looked at the tall houses, girdled by iron balconies, with their



huge windows placed so close together that they made the walls seem almost transparent; the numerous large windows gave the dwellings an air of open-heartedness; green vines floated over the iron balconies; life and cheerfulness reigned everywhere. Even in the mansard windows high aloft flowers were blooming,—scarlet geraniums and carnations.

Numerous families of worthy citizens sat before the doors of the cafés, enjoying their cheap viands, which were sometimes a little too obtrusively redolent of hot fat and onions. Jack smiled at their abrupt, angular movements, and could not help confessing that his own countrymen, with whom he choose to consider himself for the time upon a war-footing, even down to the lowest classes, looked far more aristocratic than these Parisian bourgeois; yet these bourgeois, unaffectedly comical as they were, seemed to enjoy life, and when could he say that of his countrymen?

The carriage stopped before the hotel with a somewhat careless jerk. The horse slipped, but instantly recovered his footing and spread his stiff forelegs somewhat amazingly wide apart. An odor of scorched asphalt blended with the scent of the fresh green leaves. The foliage of the Tuileries gardens appeared in the distance far down the Rue de Castiglione. On the right and left of the hotel were glittering show-windows, filled with all sorts of charming trifles, principally knick-knacks and all kinds of old-fashioned *bric-à-brac*, which might tempt idle loungers of taste. Among the various



articles, old buckles, buttons of imitation gems, and mock enamel, Jack suddenly discovered a little enamelled snuff-box, representing a shepherd in a blue-green landscape, which his practised eye instantly recognized as a masterpiece, and which, before entering the hotel, he purchased at a very low price (at least he thought it so).

Then he went into the hotel, whose door stood hospitably open, where the landlord instantly came forward to inform him that the room for which "Monsieur" had telegraphed was ready. He was known here, so he was spared the title of "My Lord," which his bearing and the modelling of his countenance invariably called forth from all Frenchmen of the lower class.

"Would Monsieur dine at once or go directly to his room to brush up a little?"

Jack preferred to "brush up" first, and followed the landlord, who bustled before him, to a large, airy apartment.

"Monsieur did not bring his valet?"

"No."

"Then I'll send some one up to unpack the trunks and help Monsieur, as soon as they come," said the landlord, retreating with a courteous bow.

Jack wanted to dispense with assistance, and set to work manfully. He unbuckled all his bags, pulled out their whole contents, could find nothing, and was standing helplessly in the midst of a chaos of articles impatiently tossed together, when the waiter entered and took pity on his clumsiness. For Jack *was* clumsy,—he perceived it for the first



time, and with vexation, for it was a very inconvenient quality in the mode of life he intended to pursue. He had always considered himself practical and inured to hardships, and so he was, so far as sporting matters were concerned. When occasion required, he could not only saddle and bridle a horse, but feed and care for it like a professional groom; he was tireless in hunting, and feared neither bad weather nor any other discomfort. But in ordinary life he was as helpless and pampered as a child two years old or a fashionable young lady.

After he had bathed and dressed he left the waiter to set his room in order, and feeling really hungry, went down to the dinner awaiting him in the dining-hall. This little dinner had been selected with special reference to Jack's tastes, which had long been well known in the Hotel Castiglione, and the table was set with the appetizing cleanliness and care understood by Frenchmen alone. Jack told himself that it was long since he had been so well served or felt so comfortable, yet a feeling slowly stole over him to which at first he could have given no name. It was not homesickness, but something quite different,—a longing for warm, human sympathy, a sense of desertion, of loneliness; and when a short time later he sipped his coffee in the little court-yard, with its exotic plants rustling softly in their pots, he was delighted when the big black poodle belonging to the hotel, an old acquaintance, laid its shaggy head on his knee and licked his hand.



After dinner he loitered a little while under the arcades which run along the Rue Castiglione, and then wandered out into the Place de la Concorde. The water plashed monotonously in the black basin. At Jack's left hand white statues stood forth in spectral relief against the dark background of the chestnut-trees in the garden of the Tuileries, at his right stretched the sea of leafage of the Champs Elysées, twinkling with all sorts of scintillations, ordinary rows of street lamps and glowing arabesques of light on the façades of the great cafés. He went to the bank of the Seine. A few steamboats, huge, indistinct, shadowy, lighted only by the rays of one or two red lanterns, lay on the water, whose dark, restless surface caught and bore away the reflection of the stars, while beyond rose the Paris of the Rive Gauche, also dark, majestic, an endless wall of blackness illumined here and there with flashes of light. The Seine rippled at his feet, and in the distance echoed the hoarse murmur of the capital, while dominating all, borne along by the airiest rhythm, a terribly mournful waltz melody floated from one of the cafés in the Champs Elysées. A woman whose cheeks flamed with rouge smiled at him as she passed.

He shuddered. No, Paris was less cheerful than he had thought. Yet how much of the poesy of life, how much of the "sweet anguish of existence," blended with this profound melancholy of the night!

A wish to retain some portion of the scene in



order to reproduce it in his own way stirred in his heart,—the first restlessness of the creative impulse of the artist. He would fain have found words to describe or colors to paint it. Suddenly the infinity surrounding him dwindled, he saw only a few tall black silhouettes of trees on the bank of the Seine, far below in the distance, and beside them the dark water reflecting the quivering star-light. He saw a picture——

Why had this never been painted? Ah, if he could try it! Why shouldn't he? A pungent odor of musk reached him,—a pretty, fair-haired woman, with fixed, glassy black eyes, approached, gazing boldly at him as she passed. He turned away and walked on a few steps, absorbed in thoughts of his future picture, when he suddenly paused in mingled surprise and admiration. A young woman, meanly clad, but with a most queenly bearing, was advancing directly towards him along the bank of the Seine. Her figure was tall and pliant, her face at once aristocratic and classically beautiful in its contour, long deep-blue eyes sparkled under heavily marked brows, narrowing to a slender line at the temples, the nose was short and straight, the mouth rather large, but exquisitely beautiful, the upper lip especially being most delicately chiselled. Her whole appearance, down to the light veil she wore knotted around her head, showed a blending of poverty and distinction which rendered her solitary walk in the gathering darkness doubly suspicious. Besides, she was moving at a very slow pace. Scarcely



realizing what he was doing, as if attracted by the magnetism of her pallid beauty, Jack spoke to her. She started and stopped. Jack addressed her a second time,—in the old formula used by Faust and repeated by every young man who seeks to enter into conversation with a pretty woman in the street. She looked at him with a glance whose indignant despair lingered in his memory forever, then, without vouchsafing him even a rebuff, darted past him into the throng of carriages in the Place de la Concorde.

Ere he was aware of it she had disappeared. He stood a few moments as if rooted to the ground. Every pulse was throbbing. He was enraged with himself for having wounded a young and beautiful girl, whose indignant rejection of his homage had awakened a far deeper interest.

He could not forget her look,—haughty, indignant, sorrowful. It seemed as if her eyes had said, “What does it avail that I look as regal as a queen? You venture to accost me merely because I wear a shabby gown and am obliged to go out alone; in other words, because I am poor and unprotected.”

Every generous, kindly emotion in his nature, and they were many, rebelled against the thought.

He would fain have rushed after her and besought her forgiveness on his knees.

In fact, eccentric, impulsive Jack had fallen in love with the beautiful stranger at first sight.

True, according to all indications, he was destined to love a phantom.



He gazed angrily across the Place de la Concorde, where she had vanished. Paris stretched before him like a sea of moving shadows intermingled with vivid rays of light. To seek a stranger in this bewildering labyrinth, with no clue, was madness. He longed to escape from his folly, and walked down the lamp-lit, chestnut avenues to the first *café chantant*. But on the threshold of the temple of short-skirted muses he paused, —the dissonant gayety was distasteful, and, turning his back on the “Horloge,” he went to his hotel.

For the first time he found a Parisian evening very long, the more so as sleep, when he at last went to bed, was tardy in coming.

Ay! it was folly, no one knew that better than he himself, folly to seek a beautiful woman in the vast city of Paris,—a poor woman, too; that is, one who could not be found in her box at the opera or her carriage in the Bois. Yet fortune often favors fools, he said to himself, why should it not smile on him?

He hoped that it would favor him, and therefore spent a week in ransacking every quarter of the capital, his eyes so eagerly fixed upon the distance that they overlooked objects close at hand, which sometimes brought him into uncomfortable contact with pedestrians who were quietly walking beside him on the narrow pavements of the inner city, several of whom he nearly ran over or almost embraced. At the end of a week he grew some-



what weary of this fruitless pastime, laughed at himself, and renounced it.

He had learned two things in the course of this time: first, that the artist to whom his Aunt Jane had given him the letter of introduction was not in Paris; and, secondly, that the French capital was not the best place of abode for a man who, like himself, desired to acquire the art of economy as speedily as possible. So he determined to spend the warm months at a little watering-place on the sea-coast, which was colonized every summer by Parisian artists, and where he could, at the same time, sketch and make acquaintances among them.

One bright July morning he reached Cayeux, a wretched village, where lodgings at the most expensive hotel cost only six francs per day. Turning his back upon it, he hired a picturesque fisherman's cottage very suitable for his purpose, engaged a sailor to do his work and an old fish-wife, who had formerly been a cook, to attend to his kitchen. He felt extremely well satisfied with his surroundings, formed many acquaintanceships with artists and sailors, and turned his back upon the casino set.

He swam like a fish, splashed about in the waves for hours, bought a small sail-boat, and won the admiration of all the seafaring folk by the skill with which he steered far out into the offing, and once when, in a terrible storm, a little vessel which was unable to run into the harbor appealed for help with despairing alarm-signals, amid the fury of the raging elements, he was one of the first to



drag the life-boat from its fire-proof house and help to get it afloat. He even rowed with the sailors over the boiling surges to the aid of the imperilled men. Great was the praise bestowed upon him, so great that he was really ashamed.

Most of the sailors who undertook the dangerous work of rescue were married men, and if any mischance befell them, would leave their families in poverty, yet they had risked their lives with the most simple courage as if it were a matter of course. No one wondered and no cheer greeted them as, dripping wet and panting with exertion, they ran into port with the crew over the foaming waves, between whose white crests yawned black abysses.

But there was no end to the amazement of the people that the aristocratic "Milor" had soiled his hands and drenched his clothes to assist in the work. He was lauded as though he had performed the whole unaided. To show his good-will to the fisher-folk, and also divert their attention from his own person, he invited them all to drink punch at the favorite sailors' tavern, and caroused with them till he was really ill. He was fond of the people, but his nerves often rebelled against their bombastic, liberal views of the world.

As has been mentioned already, most of his acquaintances outside of the fishermen were artists; he liked to talk with them, greatly enjoyed their delicacy of feeling and capacity for enthusiasm, their appreciation of humor, their childlike simplicity, the exuberance of life which sparkled in their eyes and echoed in every spontaneous re-



mark, and which was doubly pleasing to Jack, who had so long been satiated with the aristocratic listlessness of his own countrymen. He fell into the habit of walking with them, watching them while they painted, and was soon familiar with the mannerism of every genius in Cayeux, smiling secretly at the tame strokes of one, the bold daubing of another. Scarcely a single individual ventured to look nature frankly in the face; all paid homage to some artistic conventional idea, which they defended, whenever the conversation turned upon it, with actual fanaticism by theories stretching back to spectral analysis.

“But do cease this continual pondering, open your eyes, look about you, drink in the beauty which surrounds you, often in the most simple things, and then—why, then strive to reproduce whatever portion of all this loveliness has entered your soul through your eyes,” Jack would fain have exclaimed. Of course he repressed the impulse, first, because he was a modest fellow, who did not feel authorized to instruct artists, of whom many already bore famous names in their own trade; lastly, because it was certainly to be supposed that they, at any rate, knew more about the matter than he did, and, moreover, he desired to remain on good terms with them, and therefore avoided irritating their sensitive natures. He had a very large share of tact; that is, the instinctive gift of quickly perceiving and consequently sparing all thin-skinned, easily wounded spots in the minds and persons of his associates.



Though he set little value on the work of most of those about him, he was at first reluctant to show the unskilfulness of his 'prentice hand among these professional artists who had so thoroughly mastered their calling. But one day, at dawn, he set out fully equipped for painting, and passing the rose-wreathed houses which bordered the crooked, ill-paved main street of Cayeux, went into the open country, seeking to enter into some specially close communion with nature in the sacred stillness of the early morning.

He was alone and hoped to remain so. Suddenly, however, he perceived a long-limbed shadow at his side,—one of his artist friends had discovered him. Jack flushed crimson; but, instead of the smile of indulgent mockery he had expected, he saw on the young Frenchman's face an expression of genuine surprise which found vent in the exclamation, "Why, you have talent, my dear fellow; you are an artist to the finger-tips!"

Jack credited at least fifty per. cent. of this praise to friendship; like all clear-brained men, he was modest, but every pulse tingled with pleasure and his ears burned.

The resolution to devote himself to art, at first formed carelessly, assumed firmer proportions with each passing day. He remained in Cayeux till twilight closed in early and the waves became dull, gray, and very cold, so cold that not even the sailors would wet their feet in them unless compelled to do so. But Jack still swam out daily in the dull, colorless autumn sea, far, far out, till ex-



perienced old sailors warned him that it was dangerous, but he always returned home, with sparkling blue eyes and ruddy cheeks, precisely at the hour he had appointed, and set zealously to work again. His soul was filled with the pleasant fervor of a natural creative impulse; he was indeed an artist to the finger-tips, but——

He left Cayeux in the middle of October, taking with him a big portfolio filled with studies of landscapes and the warm sympathy of the ancient hamlet.

Nearly five months had passed since that day. What had happened during this period? Nothing special, indeed very little, yet all sorts of things.

Among others, Jack had made a very big hole in the small remnant of his property. He really could not live on an income of three hundred pounds; it was simply impossible.

At first he had experienced scruples concerning the old extravagant habits which daily gained ground; but, in spite of his sister-in-law's jesting warning, he had constantly quieted them by the thought of the building-lots, which, sooner or later, must bring in millions, as well as the conviction that he was destined to make immense sums by his art.

This conviction had been strengthened by an American art-dealer, who had advanced a large amount of money upon the clever studies Jack had brought with him from Cayeux, and engaged everything he could do.



No purchaser for the lots had appeared, the art-dealer's advance payment had been spent, the laudatory articles which the enterprising American had had printed in various newspapers concerning the genius he had hired had long been forgotten by the public, but the two marine pictures ordered, a storm and a sunrise, each two and three-quarters of a yard wide by two yards high, were not yet painted.

The art-dealer was growing impatient and called to see Jack every week. During the last one he had been twice. Jack already felt the greatest desire to throw his advance payment at his head, but where was he to get it?

What had he been doing during these past five months? Directly after his return from Cayeux, filled with the artistic impulse of creation and the firmest resolve to take life seriously, his first effort had been to make a fitting framework for his professional career. He had hired a studio and furnished it, according to all the rules of artistic tradition, with beautifully-carved antique wooden furniture, Oriental rugs and Japanese screens, bronzes, armor, and all kinds of tasteful *bric-à-brac*. While doing this he became convinced that he had been very unwise to sell his London furnishings. When his studio and living-rooms were arranged to suit his taste, he at first began to do a little work. But the concentrated interest in art which had sustained him in Cayeux was lacking here. It seemed as if his hands were weighted with lead; some fresh diversion constantly drew him from the easel. He



felt the lack of preliminary study. Now and then he honestly resolved to toil and moil until he could reach a high place in art. He sketched with several dozen long-haired youths in the — Academy. It interested him,—his efforts pleased the professors, but something always interfered.

At first he had made a point of keeping up his acquaintanceship with the artists whom he had met at Cayeux; he had sought them in their modest homes or entertained them brilliantly in his bachelor quarters. But by degrees he saw less and less of them, though he himself would have been unable to give a reason for it. A few of his former friends, among them a cousin who was an attaché of the English embassy, had sought him, and—and—the atmosphere of the social circles in which he had been reared seemed homelike. After associating for a long time exclusively with artists, he found the gay world extremely entertaining. His countrymen were as amusing in Paris as they had often been tiresome in London. In Paris the most decorous among them read novels, strummed polkas,—nay, even shirked church and went to the theatre. The whole oppressive burden of English national cant had been left in England, with the cold, gray fog under whose influence it had developed. Now and then some mentor raised his voice, but he was simply laughed down. They attended the theatre with charming young women,—the little, worthless theatres where people have such good times,—supped at Bignon's, went to the most magnificent entertainments given by Ameri-



can parvenus, sneered at the host, laughed when the butler was mistaken for the master of the house and the former took offence, danced at all the embassy balls, and appointed hours of meeting intimate friends at one house or another, skated in the Bois till the weather grew milder, rode on horseback between eight and ten in the morning,—Jack had so many wealthy friends who were always ready to lend him their horses. Ay, the last five months had not been the least pleasant ones in Jack's life, but—day after day the feeling of discomfort stole in,—the thought where all this was to end. If only the confounded scarcity of money had not pinched him so! He rubbed his forehead. It was horrible and yet ridiculous that the very people who, like himself, most thoroughly despised money were least able to do without it.

It was a March day, the *mi-carême* which every year introduces a time of carnival into the midst of Lent. It had always been the custom in Paris to celebrate it as a day of merry-making, and the population strove to keep up the old habit, but could not quite accomplish it. The discord of the unreal mirth artificially conjured up for the sake of the date rose to his ears from the street below. He started up from the divan on which he had peevishly stretched his long limbs and, thrusting his hands into the pockets of his jacket, pressed his short, well-formed nose against the panes of his studio window. This window looked out upon the Boulevard Rochechouard, and opposite to him towered a row of not very edifying places of



amusement, among them the notorious *Boule Noire*.

Along the centre of this boulevard ran a row of stunted city trees,—Jack could not clearly distinguish whether they were plane-trees or chestnuts. Spring was already stirring within them: most of the brown husks had burst open, and little pale-green, closely-folded leaves peeped forth. Almost directly in front of Jack's window was a street-car station; every five minutes one stopped; what a throng of human beings rushed to it, men, women, children, even sickly babies who were being taken on a pleasure jaunt!

“How unlovely humanity is *en masse*!” Jack exclaimed, turning away, especially Parisian humanity taking holiday!

But though he might retreat from the window a hundred times, the dissonances pervading the street below pursued him into the farthest corner of his apartments. There was the continual rattling of the carriages, the “tu-tu” of the car-drivers, that horrible “tu-tu” which reminded him of the last act of “Ernani,”—the wailing of a frightened child and the mournful sighing of the March wind through the branches of the trees where the buds were beginning to open. And, moreover, Jack was haunted by the unpleasant memories of his increasing debts, the building-lots which were not sold, the marine pictures which were not painted, and burdened by the physical depression with which every half-way sensible man pays the penalty for having thought of noth-



ing but his own amusement during five long months.

He arrived at the conviction that life was thoroughly shallow, and the only thing of genuine importance and real value which it contained was—work.

He would really labor in earnest. The two marines must wait. He felt just now an actual distaste for marines; he had seen too many of them recently at a public auction in the Hotel Druot; six-and-twenty, all green, mingled with specks of white foam, which were part of the property left by a famous marine artist. Brr! They all seemed to him to bear much more resemblance to crushed Reine-Claude compote than to the sea. He would hire a model, sketch carefully from all directions to sharpen his eyes again. H'm! but he was so isolated, to whom could he apply for counsel? Help was so near,—the artist to whom his aunt had given him the letter of introduction lived only a few paces away. True, he had never mentioned it, but he had always been very cordial to Jack. And he lived so near, scarcely five minutes' walk. Jack seized his hat and went up the Boulevard Clichy to Armand Sylvain's residence, where he climbed a narrow, slippery staircase to the third story, and rapped at an unpretending yellow door.

In response to a hoarse "Come in" he entered the master's studio. It was lofty, very spacious, and supplied with a huge glass window which almost completely filled the side towards the street, but it was very dusty, cheerless, almost bare of



ornament, and furnished only with half a dozen easels and two or three rough tables heaped with all sorts of artists' materials.

On one of these easels stood a gypsy girl bedizened with zechins, on another a gloomy picture, a scene from the Bulgarian insurrection,—mangled corpses on a dreary plain under a lowering sky black with storm-clouds.

A pair of limbs, modelled from life, hung on the wall amid various studies, and the floor was strewn with splashes of paint and cigar-stumps.

Armand Sylvain was standing before one of the easels, with a tall silk hat on his head and a big white silk muffler wound round his large red throat. With these exceptions he was clad entirely in gray. He was a very large man, and evidently had been a very handsome one, but one saw at the first glance that he had never understood how to restrain himself in the indulgence of any pleasure. His powerful limbs were disfigured by gout, his once delicate, muscular hand was flabby and fat, his smoothly-shaven cheeks, double chin, and thick red lower lip had also relaxed, the curved nose had coarsened, and loose white bags of flesh hung below the somewhat prominent black eyes.

His teeth were still good, and the moustache twisted at the ends was almost pathetic with its inharmonious air of youth. Sylvain was alone in the studio when Jack entered; a pleasant discovery: the malcontent journalists who sometimes assembled in the artist's studio were disagreeable to the young Englishman.



"Have you really come again?" cried the old artist, extending his hand, "and it isn't even Ash-Wednesday."

"Why, do you suppose I come to you merely to atone for my sins?" asked Jack, gayly.

"At any rate you come only when you are suffering the reaction from too much gayety," muttered Sylvain; "but sit down, sit down. Will you have a cigarette? H'm! I see you haven't come on account of a low state of the moral barometer; you have some business matter."

"I came to chat with you a little while about art," said Jack.

"Indeed! My art or yours?" asked Sylvain, humorously.

"My art does not yet exist," Jack answered.

"Ah, that's true, perfectly true; and mine exists no longer," he added, bursting into a loud, harsh laugh; "at least people say so. Pshaw! spiteful hounds! envy, sheer envy. Well, how can I serve you?"

"Master, I want at last to toil in genuine earnest; I want to *work*."

"I said that a fit of the blues had brought you to me," cried Sylvain.

"Must a man have the blues to remember that he is an artist?" asked Jack.

"In the case of people like you," Sylvain answered. "Art is the Paradise of the outcast; to men of your stamp, who have more entertaining objects in life, it is merely a kitchen-garden in which seed is sown as fast as possible to reap the



most abundant harvests. But the worst of it is that the accursed witch resents a man's failing to give her the whole devotion of his heart. H'm! You will never amount to anything, believe me, my dear fellow, notwithstanding your talent; you haven't the temperament to become absorbed in the great illusion. To a genuine artist art is life, and life itself a minor affair. To you life will always be the main thing. H'm! deuce take it! you are created to enjoy existence. Are you in any financial straits? H'm! Well, well! Marry; it is the only career which suits you. What have you been doing lately?"

"Not much; I have commenced a landscape from one of the sketches I made at Cayeux, but I don't get on very well,—the thing bores me."

"Of course it bores you!" cried Sylvain. "You are a landscape-painter only from indolence, because you imagine that in landscape-painting people can indulge their most reckless fancy and most easily dispense with definite forms. Let me tell you that a well-executed landscape is one of the most difficult tasks which an artist can undertake. But who thinks of that? And merely smearing a canvas hap-hazard, which is what is usually termed landscape-painting, is an abomination to me,—actually loathsome. You need go no farther in that direction. Your talent lies elsewhere. You have the capacity to characterize human individuality. But first of all you must learn to draw; you can always manage color; it is the accursed form which will give you trouble. Draw, draw,



draw, if you want to accomplish anything! That is the only advice I can give you. But—hem!—you'll amount to nothing. Marry, my dear fellow, marry."

Jack did not know whether to laugh or get angry. As it was hard to choose, he did both.

"We'll attend to one suggestion for the present, and meanwhile I will ask you for more definite counsel. Like you, I am certain that it is very necessary for me to sketch, and I merely wanted to inquire whether you could recommend a model who is fit for various kinds of study?"

"A model? Take Luca Canini; he's a thorough Neapolitan, pock-marked, ugly as night, but everything you require in regard to muscles and endurance. He'll clean your brushes, too, and attend to commissions,—all sorts of commissions. He's one of the most unprincipled rascals in Paris; still, you can always leave money before him, but take care of your letters."

"As I don't mean to strike up an intimate friendship with him, I don't mind his morals. Will you kindly give me his address?"

"Yes, yes," growled Sylvain, harshly; then, suddenly flying into a furious rage, he cried, "I notice that during the fifteen minutes you have spent here you have turned your back upon all my pictures."

"Why, master! I refrained——"

"Oh, from what should you refrain? Open your eyes. What do you say to this canvas?" With these words Monsieur Sylvain planted himself in front of his Bulgarian corpses.



Jack was very reluctant to speak falsely. "The picture is horrible," he said, slowly, "but it is magnificently painted."

"I believe you,—I'm sure it's well painted. I should like to know a single one of the artists who rule the picture market to-day who could come within a hand's-breadth—ay, a hand's-breadth of me! There is power, imagination!"

"Yes, yes. Colossal, colossal!" murmured Jack, but without sincere conviction. In the depths of his heart he considered the artist's production old-fashioned.

Sylvain frowned. Just at that moment some one knocked.

The artist started. "Come in!" he called; adding, "Come, Luca," as a man clad in slovenly attire, half city, half provincial, entered. Instead of a shirt-collar he wore a gay cotton kerchief around his neck. An indescribably servile grin, intended to be conciliatory, distorted his pock-marked face. He had long hair, parted on the right side, small, cunning blue eyes, a turned-up nose, and thick lips.

It was evident that he was of Italian birth; but one could not help wondering how an Italian could manage to look so ordinary.

"Luca Canini," said Sylvain, as if presenting him to Jack. "You come just in the nick of time," he added; "here is a young gentleman who wants a model."

"*Al suo servizio, Eccellenza!*" replied Luca, grinning and pressing his dirty soft gray felt hat to his breast.



"When do you wish to begin?" asked Sylvain.  
"To-morrow?"

"No, not to-morrow. I promised Lady Leclerq to go to the Bois with her."

"Yes, there we have the story," laughed Sylvain.

"To-morrow, then, for aught I care," cried Jack, angrily. "I'll excuse myself to Lady Leclerq, and turn boor, merely to prove that I really mean to be an artist."

"You must, or you'll never get on," Sylvain assented. "Shall I arrange the price for you?"

"Whatever Milor' gives will content me," Luca protested, with his cringing servility. "If it suits the gentleman, at nine to-morrow. Very well, then,—at nine. But I beg a thousand pardons, there's a female model at the door,—if you will permit me to bring her in,—perhaps she might be useful to one of the gentlemen."

"I am supplied for the present," replied Sylvain; "and I would advise you"—turning to Jack—"not to commence with a female model. In the first place, the structure of the male figure is more strongly marked; you will learn more; and, secondly, the artistic earnestness of the situation is less imperilled."

"But this is such a remarkably beautiful model. *Scusi, Eccellenza*, just a moment." Without waiting for an answer, Luca opened the door and called "Angiolina!"

A young Italian woman of about two-and-twenty, tall, broad-shouldered, and with a head of remark-



able beauty, entered the studio. She was muffled in a gray waterproof cloak, and, like many girls of her station in Paris, wore no covering on her head.

"Take off that thing!" cried Sylvain, in his business-like artist manner, pulling at the end of her cloak.

Luca Canini officiously helped her to remove the ugly wrap.

Under the mantle she wore a dark-green gown, plain to bareness, but free from any touch of bad taste, and beneath whose folds, falling gracefully around her, the beautiful contours of her figure were distinctly visible.

"Well, what do you say to this?" asked Sylvain, taking the young person by the elbow and turning her towards Jack.

His eyes met the model's. His heart gave a sudden throb. He recognized the mysterious beauty whom he had seen the evening of his arrival in Paris on the bank of the Seine.

The blood mounted to his brow; he perceived that she also recognized him and that the remembrance of their first meeting was disagreeable. She averted her face, frowning angrily.

"What a figure!" cried Sylvain; then, turning to the model, he asked, "*Posez-vous l'ensemble?*"

At this perfectly justifiable business question Jack felt his blood burn to his finger-tips; the girl started as if she had received a blow.

"No, she won't; she never will," answered Luca, in a tone of sincere regret.



"She is perfectly right," returned Sylvain, bluntly; "so it's only the head and hands?"

"Yes; but just see what hands they are, Eccellenza!" Luca took Angiolina by the finger-tips to make the artist note their exquisite beauty. "The long fingers and the shape of the thumb, and the delicate yet strong wrist,—and the nape of the neck!"

Luca seized the model by the hair, which was twisted in a heavy knot somewhat low on the neck.

The girl shook off his hand; her eyes sparkled with a wrathful light.

"That is sufficient; I will write the address," said Sylvain, taking up a bit of charcoal.

"Angiolina," Luca began, "Rue de la Rochefoucauld."

"Yes,—and the price?"

"Ten francs a sitting."

"That's high," remarked Sylvain.

The girl was about to speak; Luca interrupted her.

"She is an unusually beautiful model."

"That is true." Sylvain had written the address; he nodded to the girl, "Good-morning; I'll send you a postal-card if I need you."

Meanwhile, Jack had helped her put on her cloak, receiving only a bend of the head by way of thanks.

Luca was going with her. "Have you arranged your business with him?" Sylvain asked Jack. "He is to come to you to-morrow at ten, isn't he?"



"No. 4, Boulevard Rochechouart," said Jack. Luca vanished, grinning.

"What do you say to the Italian girl?" Sylvain asked the young Englishman, after the door had closed behind the model. "A phenomenal beauty; I must paint her. An idea has just entered my head,—a Vestal Virgin in Spring! That will be splendid,—a masterpiece! Why, my dear fellow, how you look! You are positively bewitched,—and yet mean to study art seriously, when the beauty of the first model upsets you in this fashion?" Monsieur Sylvain could not stop laughing.

"Nonsense!" Jack muttered, through his teeth. "Nonsense! there are certain circumstances——"

"What kind of circumstances?" asked Monsieur Sylvain.

Jack frowned; he suddenly saw, very clearly, that any explanation of the circumstances of his acquaintance with Angiolina, the serious view he took of the matter, would render him no less ridiculous in the eyes of the old Frenchman. So he kept the circumstances to himself. "I must go to dinner," he said, seizing his hat.

"Indeed; with whom do you dine?" asked Sylvain.

"With the Grants at the Continental; we are going to the theatre in the evening."

"Aha, with the Grants! Very rich Americans, and pretty girls, too. The oldest one likes you, doesn't she? Marry, my dear fellow; take my advice, marry; it's the only career which will suit you. If you knew how much perseverance and



sacrifice it requires to make a real artist! Mine did not hold out, unfortunately. You see what I have become. Well, well, a man mustn't belittle himself, and all Paris shall talk about my next picture,—I tell you that in advance,—all Paris."

Jack left the studio in an excited, angry mood.

He was familiar with the old artist's career,—everybody in Paris knew it,—and while dressing for dinner he pondered over it.

Armand Sylvain was a man who, gifted by nature with great talent, had made a brilliant entrance into the world of art at a comparatively early age, a *début* still remembered in art circles, and who now belonged to the mournful category of the by-gones.

He had succeeded in life too early. His artistic idealism had been stifled, at first slowly, then more and more rapidly, by success and the prosperity which follows in its train.

The deep earnestness which is the substance of all genuine artistic aspiration had been lost in the desire for pleasure and the delightful opportunity presented for gratifying it. He knew this and theorized extensively about it, but without checking the pursuit of enjoyment which was destroying the artistic side of his nature. Art was to him a lucrative profession, which helped him to a pleasant life. His thoughts were no longer occupied with his pictures, but with the great ladies who flattered him, and with whom he spent evening



after evening, ostensibly to study new types for his paintings, but really because the charm which surrounded these aristocratic dames was so fascinating to his artistic temperament and his vanity that it held him captive, because he felt at home here, and nowhere else was indolence so delightful as in this world of elegance. Yet he did not neglect his colleagues; he was always hail fellow well met with them, and ready for any studio merry-making; he emptied his glass of wine to-day at the same table with his porter, and to-morrow sipped his goblet of champagne at the banquet given by his emperor; he was never ashamed of a poor relation or a shabby friend, and, besides his various aristocratic flirtations, was on terms of intimacy with the most famous actresses of the day. No, he neglected no one save—art. He was still a fashionable painter, but no longer an artist. Every day he performed a set task,—dashed off with skilful haste,—executed with rapid strokes and usually glaring effects of color a picture which some covetous art-dealer took from the easel before the paints were dry. For the rest, he relied upon advertising to maintain his reputation. He had pursued this course a long time, but it was impossible to maintain such a condition of affairs permanently.

A few journalists, whom he had known all his life and who had grown old and bitter with him, a few young men to whom he had done favors, still kept up a little clamor about him, and some American art-dealers preserved him from want.



This was all he could boast of in his old age. He no longer desired to go into society. His old admirers still invited him, but, after all, there was little amusement in sitting among a group of elderly ladies and protesting that he did not see their wrinkles, while young artists were paying court to fair women,—women who belonged to a generation who knew nothing of his renown.

His health had failed with his talent; he suffered from gout and asthma, and could not reconcile himself to his gray hair. His only pleasure now consisted in sitting in front of the Café Tortoni for two hours, in the midst of a group of artists and literati, who, like himself, were dissatisfied with the degree of success they had attained, and discussing his theories.

He possessed the extensive vocabulary and crushing paradoxes of artists whose fame is waning. Formerly an appreciative colleague and kindly comrade, he was now consumed with professional envy, overflowing with injurious judgments of all rising young artists, and full of praise of the performances of the work of the young women.

He had all sorts of theories concerning art,—theories in and of themselves correct and clever, but which became wearisome to his hearers because he used them only to prove the excellence of his own work and the worthlessness of other people's productions.

Every day he sat in front of Tortoni's for two long hours preaching; in other words, reviling. It was the sole pleasure his botched life knew.



The thought of this marred artistic career haunted Jack all the evening.

In many respects Sylvain's example was a warning. "Marry, marry!" echoed in his ears. "It is the only career which suits you."

Perhaps the old man was right. During the dinner he was pursued by the thought whether a union with pretty, elegant, vivacious Miss Grant might not afford the best escape from his financial difficulties. Marrying her was certainly less terrible than wedding Mary Winter. He began to consider the matter very seriously.

Suddenly the face of the poor Italian model rose before him. In vain he tried to drive it away; in vain he strove to form a sensible resolution. It would not depart.

He became more and more silent, and, at the theatre, to which he accompanied the Grants after dinner as had been arranged, he sat behind the two ladies with a listless air, scarcely noticing what was passing on the stage.

Miss Grant glanced at him several times, but he avoided her eyes.

By the time the play reached the third interval between the acts Miss Grant had reached the conviction that nothing was to be expected from this young man, and, as she was a practical person, she instantly relinquished all efforts to change the situation, nay, even consoled herself with the thought that Jack had no title, and consequently really never had been so very desirable a match.

They parted at the close of the performance on



the best possible terms, like two persons who knew exactly what each had to expect from the other, Miss Grant holding out her hand in the most friendly manner as Jack took his leave at the door of the hotel, and he could not help acknowledging that American women, after all, had some good traits.

He made his way homeward in a somewhat depressed mood.

When he had left the Rue de la Chaussée d'Antin behind him, the neighborhood became silent and desolate. There were few street-lamps, the night was dark; an odor of wet stones pervaded the streets; large drops of water fell plashing from the roofs upon the pavement; a transparent gray mist was doing its best to blur the outlines of every object.

The buzz and hum of music from the cheap dancing-halls reached his ears,—the distance was too great to recognize the melody,—it was akin to the odor of repulsive food. A pair of masked figures emerged from a side-street; the man disguised as a Scot, with very thin legs and too long a body; the woman as a Columbine, with drooping wings. Both looked half famished, and the man was singing with the quavering remnants of what had once been a well-trained voice,—

*“ J'étais assis près d'elle,  
Un souffle d'air léger  
Apportait jusqu'à moi l'odeur des orangers.”*

At first Jack wanted to laugh at the cracked notes, but he could not.



"Heavens, how dreadful life is!" he thought; "the only thing worth while in it is delusion, and the most powerful delusion of all is——" He paused and stamped angrily; was he really on the verge of falling in love? A serious leaning in this direction would have been very unpleasant to him, especially for a model.

"How long has she been in Paris?" asked Jack.

It was the day after *mi-carême*. He had really given up the ride with Lady Leclercq to show his earnest devotion to art, and for two hours had steadily sketched Luca Canini's back on a piece of very coarse blue paper. The work had interested him, and he had once more become enthusiastic. Not until Luca gave unmistakable signs of weariness did he pause in his study of the Italian's bones and muscles.

Luca, shivering in spite of the additional heat maintained in the room on his account, was crouching beside the stove refreshing himself with a sandwich of bread and sausage, which he cut into small pieces with a coarse, somewhat dull pocket-knife. He ate slowly and with gusto.

Jack, who meanwhile was pacing to and fro with his hands thrust into the pockets of his coat as usual, had asked him, as if by chance, one or two questions about Angiolina.

"How long has she lived in Paris?"

"Two years," replied Luca.

"H'm! And whence did she come?"



"I don't know; she was recommended to me by a colleague."

"I suppose you receive a certain percentage from the models for procuring employment?"

"Often,—a mere trifle,—but a man must live." Luca grinned insinuatingly.

"Yes; but tell me, how does it happen that so beautiful a person as this Angiolina needs an agent to obtain patrons? She ought to be in general demand."

"She would be if anything could be done with her, but she is too prudish; she will sit only to artists who treat her like a princess. The least advance, even a jesting word, and she will not return. I ask the Signor what notions these are for a poor girl who is alone in the world and must earn her living."

Luca yawned and stretched, then clasped his hands, making all his finger-joints crack.

"So—she has a stainless reputation?" asked Jack, gruffly.

"Yes! Hitherto, yes!" Luca shrugged his shoulders, over which he had flung a green and blue plaid shawl. "Some say it is from ambition, because she aims at a wealthy husband, and others declare that she has left a lover in the Campagna. It may be so. Many of the betrothed brides who pose for artists in Rome bear unsullied names, but it is rarely so in Paris."

Jack started. The idea that Angiolina was amassing money for some black-bearded Italian mechanic or peasant to whom she was betrothed



did not affect him pleasantly. After a pause he began a second time,—

“H’m ! I shall need a model of this style. You might engage Angiolina to come to me next week.”

Luca nodded. “But the Signor knows it is only for the head and hands. She does nothing else.”

“I know, I know !” cried Jack, curtly. “I need nothing else. She is to pose for a nun.”

“Oh, if she’s to pose for a nun, I’ll see what I can do for the Signor.”

“Have you rested long enough ?”

“*Si, Eccellenza.*”

“You’ll bring me an answer to-morrow ?”

“*Si.*”

While Jack returned to the careful study of Luca Canini’s muscles, a strange feeling of pleasurable expectation stole over him. He eagerly anticipated the few hours which, for the small price of ten francs, he would be permitted to spend in the society of the beautiful model.

The next day Luca entered Jack Ferrars’s studio accompanied by a tall, thin woman, with gloomy black eyes, a sharp nose, and a face as white as chalk.

“Why, what does this mean ?” asked the young Englishman, angrily.

“Milor’ wanted a model for a nun,” Luca began, “so I ventured to bring him one ; Agathe, whose specialty is nuns and saints.”

“I wanted Angiolina and no one else !” shouted Jack.



"Angiolina cannot be had," replied Luca, with a despairing gesture; "but I can propose other nuns to Milor',—one with blue eyes and red lashes; she makes an excellent picture."

"Deuce take you!" cried Jack; "why didn't you engage Angiolina?"

"Because Angiolina can't be had; because Angiolina won't pose for Monsieur!" exclaimed the offended, rejected Agathe, in a very sharp tone.

"Why not?"

"Because—oh, I believe she thinks Milor' is too young," replied Luca Canini, still pressing his dirty felt hat against his ragged yellow shirt.

"She thinks Monsieur doesn't study art with sufficient earnestness," the model added.

At these words Jack opened the door and showed the forward Agathe promptly out of the room.

Luca, deeply abashed, approached the model's platform. "Doesn't Monsieur intend to work to-day?" he asked, timidly.

"For aught I care, yes."

"Milor' must not blame me on account of Angiolina. Heaven knows I can't help it. If Milor' only knew how whimsical she is; really, altogether too prudish. That's why all her colleagues call her the Marchesina."

Jack was vexed with himself. He firmly resolved to think no more of the Marchesina. What could be the result? The affair could end in but one way, and to pursue that systematically was



repugnant to Jack. Though unusually susceptible to feminine charms, he had never yet intentionally assumed the *rôle* of a Don Juan.

He had had no definite object in sending for Angiolina to come to his studio. His main purpose had been to strive, by the utmost courtesy, to efface the unpleasant impression which appeared to have remained on her mind after her first meeting with him on the bank of the Seine. Beyond this his thoughts encountered something hazy and indistinct, from which he avoided lifting the veil by any clear reflection. In affairs of the heart he simply left himself to his fate.

Yet, incautious as he was in this respect, he perceived that any further efforts to force himself upon the Marchesina's acquaintance could lead only to evil or folly.

He resolved to let his mind dwell on the Marchesina no longer.



## III.

MY DEAR JACK,—

Your epistles have been very rare of late. Too bad! You wrote so fully from Cayeux, such nice, amusing, pleasant letters. But this is no reproach, only a regret. Besides, I hope we shall soon have an opportunity to exchange our thoughts verbally. A great transformation has taken place in our home. Just think, Jack, Sarah is married. You certainly anticipate something terrible. But matters are not so bad. Thank Heaven, negro grandchildren will be spared me. Yet the whole matter turned on a hair. Sarah was perfectly infatuated with her African. But one day her illusions were shattered. It appeared that the calling of a clergyman was not sufficient to fill the Rev. Juniper's life. He had a more trivial occupation. By day he preached to the white slaves in the East End of London a gospel of love and temperance, and in the evening—well, in the evening he sang couplets in a *café chantant*.

Abraham Bray, the young decorator, whom you probably remember seeing at the delightful afternoon entertainment which you attended at Ivy Lodge,—you know he first executed the harmonious wall-paintings and then the piano accompaniment,—was the first to call Sarah's attention to the



interesting twofold existence of the sable missionary. She would not believe him, but he said, "Convince yourself." One evening she attended with Bray—unfortunately, I knew nothing of it until afterwards, or I might perhaps have vetoed the proceeding—a performance at the Music Hall which was the scene of Juniper's humorous activity. She wore a Salvation bonnet, and was closely veiled. Juniper appeared on the platform; at first she did not recognize him; it appears he wore a head-dress and girdle of feathers, in which costume he executed several African dances. But afterwards he entered in ordinary clothing, and sang couplets in which he ridiculed the apostles of temperance. Doubt of his identity was no longer possible, nor could there be any question of the insincerity of his ostentatious love for the cause. I had already begun to feel anxious about Sarah's prolonged absence, though I supposed her to be at a Methodist prayer-meeting. Towards midnight she returned, accompanied by Abraham Bray. She was in an indescribable state of mind, but told us all,—that is, the destruction of her delusion. Suddenly she gasped for breath and went into hysterical convulsions. We were obliged to put her to bed. When, after soothing her, I returned to the sitting-room, Bray was still there. He was bathed in tears and had rumped his yellow hair till it looked like a hail-smitten wheat-field. Rushing towards me with clasped hands, he shrieked, "How is she? Oh, that magnificent woman and that cannibal, that African crocodile!



It is infuriating, it is horrible! Oh, that magnificent woman!" It required a great deal of energy to get him out of the house.

Sarah became ill,—that is, she kept her room for several days. To tell the truth, I felt no great anxiety about her. But poor Bray was all the more concerned. He inquired for the "magnificent woman" daily. When Sarah at last came down-stairs, he was the only person whose presence she could endure, the only one who had sufficient sympathy for her condition. Gradually he began to pay her marked attention—in his own way. He sang Beethoven's penitential hymn daily, and repeated at least three times in the course of every visit that she was a grand woman.

One day last week I wondered why Sarah was so late in coming to breakfast, and sent to her chamber to ask if she was ill. She was not there. I began to be anxious. At half-past ten she appeared, leaning on Bray's arm. Both asked my blessing; they had just been married.

I felt rather sorry for the young painter, but in other respects I cannot say that I had much objection to the matter. Perhaps marriage will make Sarah a little more sensible,—at least, more like other people. He is ten years younger than she, and a fool. But, strange as it may appear to you, he is honestly and sincerely in love with her. At present they bill and coo from morning till night. They have strange plans for the future,—his art is to work wonders in the service of Sarah's ideas of morality. Both intend to convert the



whole world to temperance. She means to give readings, I believe, and he will act impressario and paint the backgrounds. Well, good luck attend them.

The most absurd part of it all is that this romance of my oldest step-daughter, vulgar and grotesque as it really is, has been sufficient to upset Mary. She is indignant with Sarah; she turns her head away or leaves the room when the husband and wife kiss each other; she talks to me about Sarah's lack of good taste: yet with it all I see that the great longing for happiness which, at the appointed hour, robs the shrewdest of clear-sightedness, the strongest of power, has taken possession of poor little Mary. Externally she is as well-bred as ever,—cold, formal, somewhat stiff. One must know her very thoroughly, watch her from morning until night, to perceive what I notice. The little flame which is flickering in her heart has only just vigor enough to torture her; could it ever become sufficiently strong to warm her whole nature, to kindle a spark in another soul? I do not know; I should almost fear the contrary.

Poor little Mary! I write in the hope that you can aid me in the effort to amuse her, give her thoughts another direction.

She told me recently that she intended to devote herself seriously to painting, and asked if I would go with her to Paris for a short time that she might pursue her studies there. When I remarked that I had not known she felt so much interest in



painting, she answered quietly, "Hitherto I have not; but we must have an object in life."

She is perfectly right, we must have an object in life; so, for aught I care, let us try art.

I hear that my old friend Sylvain has established a studio for ladies. Will you ask him in my name if he will receive Mary as a pupil? I believe he will take some little trouble with her, for the sake of auld lang syne. How far away, and how beautiful, those days are! What will he say when he sees me again with my white hair! At first he will not recognize me; then—I am an old woman now, so old that I can frankly confess how much pleasure I anticipate in meeting him once more.

But I anticipate still more in meeting you, my sunny-tempered darling. As soon as the time for our departure is fixed I will telegraph, that you may engage rooms for us in some nice quiet hotel. With best love,

Your old aunt,

JANE WINTER.

Jack received this letter in his studio one sunny afternoon in the latter part of April.

After reading it, he first uttered a humorous groan, then folded it, and finally placed it on his writing-table under a paper-weight in the form of a bronze salamander which a coquettish little Pole had given him in payment for a bet he had won. The Pole had had some sentimental association with the salamander, but Jack had none. To him it was merely a very pretty paper-weight. He was



thinking for the nonce of no women save the Marchesina. His Aunt Jane's letter momentarily diverted his thoughts from this problem. Her account of the black missionary's twofold activity filled him with malicious satisfaction; he made a wry face at the news of Sarah's marriage; in spite of his democratic principles, it did not afford him the utmost gratification to be compelled to number a Methodist house-painter among his nearest relatives. Mary's sudden passion for painting aroused a little sarcastic amusement, though with a loyal credulity rarely experienced he did not seek for an instant beneath this passion anything which Mary did not desire to betray.

That love for art was merely the pretext which enabled the girl to see her cousin Jack and share his aspirations never entered the young man's mind. It simply amused him that a person so utterly devoid of artistic talent as Mary Winter should wish to paint, and his imagination suddenly conjured up all sorts of beautiful productions in which her total want of ability would show itself. He always trembled when he thought of this little cousin. Then he good-naturedly took his hat and went to Monsieur Sylvain's to discuss Mary's artistic education with him. He met Sylvain in the street a few steps from the house where he lived.

"Ah, Ferrars! You here? Are you on your way to see me?" he cried.

"Yes," Jack answered.

"H'm!" Monsieur Sylvain smiled. "I suppose you wanted to see my new picture. *Ça marche,*



*ça marche !* It will be a famous work ; the Marchesina is sitting to me for it. You remember the Italian model. Superb ! I am painting her as a vestal virgin against a background of blooming spring flowers. Imagine it ! I've been racking my brains for a name to give the picture, for the title plays an important part nowadays. The Vestal in Spring. What do you think of that ? Or, The Vestal and the Spring ? or, The Treason of the Spring ? Eh, what do you say to that ? That's taking, isn't it ? The Treason of the Spring."

"*Ce coquin de printemps*," escaped Jack's lips. A true child of his time, the old-fashioned artist's romantic fancies produced a comical effect upon him. *Ce coquin de printemps* was the title of a wretched play which had recently been performed at a third-rate theatre on the Boulevards.

The old artist's brows contracted in an angry frown : "You are insufferable, Ferrars ; you take nothing seriously. Good-morning."

"But, Monsieur Sylvain !" cried Jack, detaining him, "how can you—if you only knew how anxious I am to see your work !"

"Indeed ?" Sylvain stopped and looked suspiciously at him. "Indeed,—really ? H'm ! Let us turn back ; I'll show you. The thing is good, —good !"

"Surely you won't go up those two flights of stairs on my account," Jack protested, considerably. "If you will allow me, I'll come to-morrow."

"Very well. But be sure to do so ; you'll be sur-



prised. Between ourselves, I owe a great deal in the picture to Angiolina." Monsieur Sylvain thrust his arm familiarly through Jack's. "That model—she is a beauty,—perfectly tireless, and a very entertaining little person. Just think, she has read Leopardi and plays the piano. She discusses literature and the last piece at the Théâtre Français with so much intelligence and interest."

"What did you say?" murmured Jack, whose blood had rushed to his brain at this mention of Angiolina.

"Yes, yes, it's very strange. I really cannot reconcile her unusual degree of cultivation with her position. I often wonder whether she may not have been for a time the companion of some clever old *roué*."

"Why, Monsieur Sylvain!" cried Jack, indignantly.

"Well, what is it?" The artist did not understand how his remark could have annoyed the young Englishman.

"What put such an idea into your head?" asked Jack, with angry bluntness.

"What put it into my head? Why, it is very natural."

Sylvain pushed his tall silk hat a little back from his forehead, and gazed quietly at his companion.

"So—h'm!—Angiolina's prudery has proved—to be—a mere invention of Luca Canini?" asked Jack, somewhat hesitatingly.

"Prudery,—prudery," Monsieur Sylvain repeated the word scornfully; "I had no opportunity to put



it to the test. She takes no fancy to me, and in my presence is a model of reserve. But what does that prove, my dear fellow,—what does it prove? And what does it matter? Tell me, why do you insist upon thinking Angiolina a Jeanne d'Arc? Oh, perhaps you are in love with the fair one?"

"Nonsense!" cried Jack. "I have never said a word to her. But——"

"Well, but what?"

"I think it is shameful to slander a girl so haphazard?" exclaimed Jack, fiercely.

"A girl," Sylvain repeated, thoughtfully, "a girl. How do you know that she is a girl? She may be a widow."

Jack bit his lips. "To be frank, it is a matter of the utmost indifference to me, Monsieur Sylvain," he retorted. "But, before I forget it, I should like to ask you a favor."

"Yes, yes, out with it. I'll do what I can,—unless it is to lend you a hundred francs, for I haven't them," answered Sylvain, jestingly.

"Don't be anxious on that score," replied Jack. "The point in question doesn't concern such matters, but relates to a cousin of mine who is seeking an object in life."

"Indeed; why doesn't she get married?" asked Sylvain. "Is she poor?"

Jack laughed heartily.

"That seems to be, in your opinion, the only sufficient reason why a girl should remain single."

"The only one, except very bad health," said Sylvain.



“In our country there are other motives which induce girls to remain spinsters.”

“H’m! With you the girls must wait till somebody falls in love with them.”

“Certainly.”

“Horrible!” cried the old Frenchman. “An idiotic state of affairs,—unhealthful,—immoral. Three-quarters of the young girls in the well-to-do, educated, middle classes are not charming enough to inspire love. Yet they are so constituted as to form very admirable wives and mothers. What do you do with them? Do they all remain single?”

“A large number of them do. The others——”

“Meet a few clever young men, who, after due examination of all accessory circumstances, persuade themselves that they feel an ardent love. Pshaw! this nonsense about marriages of affection is now creeping in among us. You may take my word for it, nine out of every ten so-called love-matches are based upon very unromantic motives. But let us talk of something else. So your cousin is devoting herself to painting in desperation because nobody has thought of falling in love with her? We’ll see what can be done for her.”

“My aunt asks whether you will receive Mary as one of your lady students?” said Jack.

“Your aunt? Who is your aunt?”

“Mrs. Winter,” replied Jack; “the lady who gave me my letter of introduction to you.”

“Yes,” replied Sylvain; “but, to own the truth, I mislaid the letter before reading it. All letters of introduction are alike, and I have certainly



received you cordially. What is your aunt's name?"

"Mrs. Winter. She was Miss Ferrars."

"Ferrars! Ferrars!" murmured Sylvain. "The name certainly seems very familiar, but I have known so many Englishwomen in the course of my life. At any rate, I am positive that your aunt is charming. You are charming, too,—only you'll never amount to anything; as an artist I mean, of course. For you are a splendid fellow. Write to your aunt whatever you choose, the most complimentary assurances; and, for Heaven's sake, don't mention that I lost the letter of introduction before reading it. I'm sure I don't know how it happened. Oh, here we are."

The artist had stopped before one of Duval's restaurants.

"You see how far I have come down!" he exclaimed. "This is my Café Anglais. Will you dine with me, Ferrars? The cooking really isn't bad."

"I know that from my own experience," replied Jack, "but the hour is too early for me. Then I can write to my aunt that you will give Mary lessons?"

"Certainly, certainly!"

When Jack returned to his studio, he drew the old lady's letter from under the paper-weight where he had placed it and read it a second time, smiling sorrowfully yet with great tenderness as he did so. "Poor old lady! How long women retain such



memories!" Jack's handsome blue eyes grew dim, and he passed his hand tenderly over the sheet written by his clever, foolish aunt; nay, he even kissed it ere he laid it aside again, and, instead of placing it on his writing-table under the salamander, he locked it in a drawer where he was in the habit of keeping a few little treasures.

Suddenly Jack remembered a sentence Napoleon wrote in a letter sent from his camp to Josephine shortly before the battle of Eylau, in reply to a few loving reminiscences from the beautiful Creole,—

"My poor Josephine! At first I hardly understood your tender allusions. What memories you women have!"

Jack sighed.

A few days later the Winters reached Paris. Jack met them at the Gare du Nord. Mary had grown prettier. True, her figure was still too thin and her teeth were prominent, but her tasteful travelling-gown fitted her perfectly, and her fresh complexion was admirably set off by the yellow skins of the Frenchwomen.

Nevertheless she had no charm for Jack,—not the slightest. He was forced to make an effort to look at or speak to her. The well-bred monotony with which the words fell from her lips drove him to despair,—the everlasting "to be sure," "how interesting," "sweet," etc. Yet she chattered continuously.

Meeting his old Aunt Jane once more, on the



contrary, filled Jack with sincere pleasure. How cordially she shared it, what warm words she found to greet her "sunny-tempered darling!"

Jack attended to everything she and Mary needed, and then entered an open carriage with the two ladies to drive to the Hotel Castiglione, where he had engaged rooms for them.

Mary talked perpetually with the same well-bred, meaningless volubility. The old lady, on the contrary, was very silent. She was restless and excited, as she dreamily inhaled the fragrance of the dewy wall-flowers and lilies of the valley which floated to them from the hand-carts of the flower-girls, or let her eyes wander over the houses and people as the carriage drove by.

"Back again in dear, wicked old Paris!" she murmured. It seemed as though some very important event was on hand, as if she were on the threshold of some change in her existence.

After Mary Winter had discovered that she needed an object in life, it also became evident to her that she must pursue this object as swiftly as possible. It was arranged that Jack was to call at the hotel the very next day and take the ladies to Sylvain. When, punctually at the hour appointed, he appeared, Mrs. Winter already sat waiting by the hearth in her little hotel parlor, attired in a heavy, stiff black silk gown, with her hands solemnly folded over a pocket-handkerchief which lay in her lap.



“What a pretty portrait you would make, auntie!” said Jack.

She straightened herself a little, blushed, and cast a side-glance into the mirror.

“Do you think so?” she murmured, in a somewhat embarrassed tone. “Well, I was never pretty, but some people liked me.”

Soon after Mary appeared, bringing a large portfolio filled with sketches.

“Would you like to look at these things, Jack?” she asked. “Which of them shall I show to Monsieur Sylvain?”

Jack tried to discover a difference between the various weak and meaningless pictures executed by his cousin, but, unable to do so, he at last advised Mary to take the whole portfolio. Mary felt flattered. There are women who manage to interpret everything as flattery. Then—while drawing on her gloves—she asked Jack to ring the bell, and ordered the waiter who answered it to call a carriage and take the portfolio down at once. She had a curt, formal manner of giving her directions which contrasted amusingly with her step-mother’s cordiality to everybody in the hotel, from the landlady down to the little “buttons” Paul, who managed the lift, and the black poodle, which was Paul’s most intimate friend.

According to her principle of always getting the full value of everything and never permitting these robbers, the Parisian hotel-keepers, to make an unfair profit, she rang for the lift, though its motion invariably made her ill, and it would have



been far more comfortable for her to walk downstairs.

The landlady, in a black China crêpe dress, stood smiling pleasantly at the door of the office, and the landlord hastily asked if the ladies intended to dine at home.

Under the red and blue striped awning, which served the purpose of a tent in the middle of the court-yard, sat two American ladies eagerly discussing their new finery. On their way out, the Winters met no less than three porters from different dressmaking establishments,—one from the Louvre, one from the Bon Marché, and one from Worth.

“It is extraordinary how much those frivolous women spend for trash,” said Mary Winter, as she entered the carriage waiting before the arcade; “it all comes from having no serious object in life.”

Then Jack crept after the two ladies into the little open carriage, where he had great difficulty in finding room for his long limbs, and they drove across the Place Vendôme, past the column shattered by the Commune, which recorded numerous victories no longer interesting to any one, through the Rue de la Paix, past the Opera House, directly across the busiest, gayest, sunniest part of Paris into the narrow labyrinth of the older streets on the Boulevard Clichy. Mrs. Winter grew more and more silent, her eyes ceased to note what was passing around her; she twitched her stiff, old-fashioned sleeves nervously up and down.

The carriage stopped. Two of the female art-students in linen blouses, with the intense expres-



sion upon haggard faces that is characteristic of art-students, now came out of a dairy where they had been dining or seeking a model.

“There are two ladies who have found their object in life,” Jack remarked, not without a touch of sarcasm, to his cousin Mary. Mary, not understanding the sarcasm, merely gazed attentively at the two disciples of art and said, “Very interesting,” after which they all three climbed the steep yellow stairs to Sylvain’s studio. The door stood open; it would have been necessary to make a special effort to avoid seeing the interior. Mrs. Winter glanced carelessly in. She perceived an old man sitting before an easel with a hat on his head and a loose white kerchief knotted about his throat,—a man with a flabby under lip and round shoulders. A little brown-skinned woman, tightly laced, with a large bust, a quantity of imitation tortoise-shell pins stuck into her elaborately-dressed hair, and cheap Parisian finery displayed all over her person, was standing by his side with her hand resting on his shoulder, saying, “You know I want fifty francs to pay the coalman.”

“Well, but I haven’t your fifty——”

Jack noticed that his aunt turned deadly pale and started back. Perhaps she would have returned to the Hotel Castiglione with her business unaccomplished, but Monsieur Sylvain looked round. The little brown-skinned woman vanished as suddenly as though she had gone through a trap-door. She had had much practice in these sudden disappearances,—Jack was familiar with



them,—and Monsieur Sylvain came forward with outstretched hands to greet his guest.

“Madame Winter” (he pronounced the name “Vintair”), “I am delighted to make your acquaintance, and also your daughter’s; that is, I had the honor of knowing you years ago, madame; we often met at Madame Anselme’s. You were the young lady who always studied the children’s heads?”

“No,” Mrs. Winter replied; “that was Miss Johnstone. I painted landscapes.”

“Landscapes,—ah, pardon me,—ah! I remember. Yes, yes, landscapes; I remember perfectly, perfectly.”

Mrs. Winter fixed her eyes on him, the large blue eyes which still remained young in her old face. Armand Sylvain started and was silent. He did remember now,—remember perfectly. Perhaps he, too, was conscious what an unworthy path he had pursued, how far he had gone downhill since he took leave of the noble girl; nay, perhaps the thought occurred to him that she herself might be aware of it. With the warm-hearted spontaneity which still occasionally forced its way through his embittered nature, he again held out his hand to Mrs. Winter and raised hers to his lips. “If you knew how distinct the past is becoming every moment!” he murmured.

Mrs. Winter was one of those persons who can extinguish a light without letting it smoke for half an hour. She now mastered the situation at once. Smiling at the old artist with no shadow



of annoyance or sentimentality, she said, kindly but calmly, "We will let the past rest, Monsieur Sylvain, and enjoy your present instead."

Sylvain's brows contracted: "There is nothing in my present which any one could enjoy."

Evidently he had never in his life been so much ashamed of the mediocrity of the goal he had won as now when he met the woman who, as a young girl, had expected such great attainments from him, believed in him so firmly.

Mrs. Winter's keen eyes wandered over the paintings standing around, without finding in them what she had visibly expected. Although she had lived in Putney and Monsieur Sylvain in Paris, she had kept up with the progress of modern art and he had not.

Mary Winter was saying alternately "sweet" and "very interesting," when the door of the studio suddenly opened and a young woman entered, dressed very plainly in black, and carrying in her arms a large sheaf of flowers.

"How beautiful!" Mrs. Winter exclaimed, almost aloud. Jack flushed crimson.

"My last model, and more princess than model," Monsieur Sylvain explained, with courteous banter. "The young lady is kind enough to pose for me as my Vestal Virgin in Spring. This picture here." He pointed to it. "She has merely provided a few flowers to bedeck the Spring with them."

"I suppose there will be no sitting to-day?" asked Angiolina, in her usual distant, suspicious manner.



“Certainly,—have patience a short time. Meanwhile, be kind enough to arrange the flowers; you know that no one understands it so well. Madame Vintair, did I not hear that your daughter wished to devote herself to painting? My friend Ferrars asked me recently if there would be room in my studio. Of course there is room for your daughter, Madame Vintair; had there not been, I would have made it. With whom have you studied, miss?”

“At the Kensington Art School.”

“Could you show me any of your work?”

“I brought a portfolio of sketches,—perhaps you will send the model down for them,” replied Mary Winter, with a side-glance towards Angiolina.

The Italian frowned angrily and drew herself up haughtily.

“Why, Mary!” exclaimed Jack; and, as Monsieur Sylvain looked somewhat perplexed, the young Englishman instantly added, “Permit me to get the portfolio.”

When, laden with Mary’s masterpieces, Jack returned to the studio, he suddenly felt something like a caress on his cheek, and involuntarily looked up. It was Angiolina’s eyes resting warmly and gratefully on him.

“What a strange man!” said Mary, after she had left the studio and entered the carriage with her companions. “He may be a great artist,” she added slowly, with the precision of a person who is conscious of a new discovery, “but he is not a gentleman.”



A leaden silence followed. Mrs. Winter averted her face,—Jack was angry. Why should his poor old aunt be forced to feel ashamed of her vanished dream? But Mary did not cease. “I believe,” she went on, “that he is not very fastidious about his society. Who was that queer woman who glided out when we entered?”

“I believe it was the housekeeper,” Jack answered, imperturbably.

“But she addressed him so familiarly,” said Mary.

“It’s the custom among artists,” Jack mendaciously replied.

Mrs. Winter had flushed scarlet and clasped her hands with a firmer pressure. After a reflective pause Mary remarked, “I consider Monsieur Sylvain an excellent teacher and will try to profit as much as possible from his instruction, but it seems advisable to restrict personal intercourse with him to the very minimum.”

After the three had returned to the Hotel Castiglione, Mary invited her cousin to do a little shopping with her. She wanted to purchase some artist’s materials in order to press forward energetically the next morning on her artistic career. Jack’s obliging offer to supply everything if she would tell him what she needed for the present was refused,—she wanted to make the purchases herself. So he marched patiently at her side from one shop to another, though with no very comfortable sensations. Mary’s low, courteous voice pitilessly criticised all the goods and beat down the



prices. She always carefully added up the bills herself, thereby ascertaining that once an error of five centimes had been made in her favor, and another time a mistake of ten centimes to her injury. This was all very correct; but Jack drew a long breath of relief when he regained the hotel with her.

The palms had been freshly watered; the whole court-yard was redolent of damp foliage and damp asphalt. Mrs. Winter sat under the red striped awning, a book which she was not reading lying in her lap. She nodded pleasantly to Jack, and, while Mary went up-stairs to dress for dinner, the young man sat down by her side.

“How silent and thoughtful you are to-day!” he said, taking her hand in his.

He knew what was passing in her mind, but he wished to induce her to speak of it; he imagined it might be a relief.

“My dear boy, I have buried an illusion to-day,” she said, with her pleasant smile. “It is always a sorrowful task, especially at my time of life, when illusions no longer grow again.”

Jack’s only reply was lightly to stroke the old lady’s hand,—the poor old hand which had already grown cold and, even on this lovely spring evening, trembled in his warm young fingers.

The old lady was also silent. After a short time she raised her head, saying, “Hold your life sacred, my boy, that you may not be obliged to suffer the humiliation of a worthless old age.”

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The Winters had been a week in Paris. They had left the Hotel Castiglione, of course, not without a protest from Mary concerning the bill, and an assurance that, under the circumstances, she would give no one in the hotel a fee. Yet the servants had not suffered, Mrs. Winter having secretly scattered a shower of twenty-franc pieces over the whole retinue. The mother and daughter were now occupying a suite of apartments in the Champs Elysées, a suite which contained a very brown dining-room, a very bright drawing-room, a boudoir, and three or four dull bed-chambers.

The whole lodgings were redolent of the English tourist; they were cold and cheerless, and too large for the needs of the Winter family. Mary Winter perceived the latter fact, but comforted herself with the belief that the rooms were very cheap, and offered Jack the use of one of them, which he declined.

Usually the apartments were empty ten hours out of the twenty-four. Mrs. Winter fled from their stiffness as much as she could, and Mary devoted herself enthusiastically to her new object in life. In the course of this one week she had daubed every conceivable object on canvas, her greatest triumph, so far, being two tomatoes beside a box of sardines.

Monsieur Sylvain had said of this performance, "*Mais je ne déteste pas cela !*" On this praise Mary had resolved to have her sketch framed.

"He praises so rarely that even a very slight expression of approval pleases me extremely," Mary said to her cousin when requesting him to



order the frame for her. She had at last relinquished her plan of doing all her shopping with him, principally because she encountered vigorous opposition to it; but to make amends she was now fond of asking him for little favors. He promised to order the frame on condition "that she would not dispute the bill." This jesting intimation, which she was clever enough to understand, made her flush crimson. "Jack, you are unjust to laugh at me. If I examine the bills closely it is from principle, not avarice. I can't bear disorder."

"And you are right, Mary; take me as a warning. This is the result of never reckoning expenses. I shall soon be borrowing a hundred francs from you."

"Certainly, Jack; why not a thousand!" Mary exclaimed, almost eagerly. Now it was Jack's turn to blush.

"Why, Mary!" he answered, reproachfully, yet shamed and a little touched.

The offer had been a trifle lacking in taste, but it had come straight from the heart. Mary Winter had unconsciously laid her hand on Jack's arm as she made the exclamation, and, when he lifted it, he kissed her fingers. Then closing the conversation, he went off to order the frame, murmuring under his breath, "I certainly misjudged my cousin; at first I believed her merely a frog. I discovered long ago that there was a hedgehog in the frog; perhaps within the hedgehog there may be a woman."

He did not dwell long upon the problem; he



had far more important and interesting matters to occupy his thoughts. Angiolina's glance, that hard-won, warm, grateful glance, would not vanish from his mind. Above everything else in the world he desired to make her acquaintance! Why should he not simply go up to her little attic room and tap at the door? Would he have been sent away? Poor, foolish Jack! Like so many another idealist, he avoided, by the most studied circumlocution, a goal which lay close before him.

It was late afternoon in the early part of May. The air was warm and fragrant. It was the season when every form of plant-life tries to grow upward from earth towards heaven, while the human race droops feebly earthward. Even Jack felt something of the spring languor in his long limbs,—something of the lassitude which at times arises from great happiness, as he strolled aimlessly through the Rue de la Rochefoucauld, thinking of Angiolina.

Twilight was beginning to gather; the saleswomen in front of the second-hand clothing-shops, which here form the principal percentage of the stores, were beginning to pack up their wares, most of which were scattered over the sidewalks. And *such* wares! Mattresses, old beds, Louis Quinze clocks, old keys, the red jacket of a Daughter of the Regiment, long since hissed off the stage, and worn-out kitchen utensils. An elderberry-bush thrust its flower-laden branches over an old wall covered with dirt and placards. Its fragrance mingled with the odor of hot stones



and the fumes rising from the cellar windows of a cheap cook-shop. Large and small dogs, apparently stray curs, with tongues hanging thirstily from their mouths, swarmed here, snuffing for bones and remnants of food, evidently not in vain. While Jack was watching them he thought of Constantinople and laughed. Suddenly he perceived a huge beast running after a tall woman dressed in black. Unfortunately, she quickened her pace, the animal pursued her, seized her by the dress, and threw her on the ground, standing over her with outspread limbs. Jack sprang at the brute, seized it by the collar, and pushed it aside. The dog, which hitherto had shown no signs of ill nature, now resisted, making every effort to bite Jack's wrist; it was no easy matter for the young Englishman to cope with him. "Stand up!" he shouted to the woman, who still lay prostrate on the ground. "I can't hold the creature by the collar forever."

She was lying with her head against the pavement, having evidently chosen this position to protect her face from the brute's attack. The lines of her figure and of the arm outstretched beside her head were matchless in beauty. A thick knot of half-loosened dark hair rested on her neck. Could it—— Just at that moment she raised her head; Angiolina's eyes looked up at Jack from a white, frightened face. He dealt the struggling cur a blow on the head which dazed the animal, and two workmen took charge of him. Jack bent over Angiolina. "For heaven's sake," he cried, "tell me! are you hurt?"



"No," she answered; "it was only fright. I thank you, I thank you with all my heart."

"There is nothing for which to thank me. I should have——" He hesitated.

She smiled, with a charmingly mischievous expression.

"Yes, what you have done for me you would have done for any one else," she said, completing the sentence.

"But you know that I would have done it for no one with so much pleasure," Jack answered.

Then Angiolina tried to rise, but in vain; she had sprained her ankle in running.

"How terrible!" he exclaimed. "I'll get a carriage."

"It is not necessary," she replied; "I am close by my own door."

"At least permit me to help you," he said, timidly,—with the timidity which always flatters women as the deepest homage.

She smiled at him. They had suddenly become aware that they had known each other a long time, —a very long time. Jack raised her; she could scarcely walk,—he dragged her along.

The house where she lived really did stand close by. It was a tall, narrow building with rickety gray blinds, the ground-floor occupied by a third-rate yarn and trimming store with a show-window whose small panes were set in red wood, and behind which were displayed the most impossible bonnets, caps, and night-sacks,—a shop that seemed to belong to some very small provincial town, yet



whose counterparts are always seen in Paris within a stone's throw of the large establishments. The proprietor of this shop—*mercerie* is the name such places bear in Paris—had rented a little room to the Marchesina.

The door of the house—it had no gate-way—stood open; a close, heavy atmosphere floated out.

“So it is here?” Jack asked.

“Yes.”

“In which story?”

“The fifth.”

“You can't walk; may I carry you up?”

Angiolina did not answer; but when he lifted her in his arms she placed hers around his neck. He carried her as carefully as a mother would tend her child. She was no light burden, but he did not feel her weight.

Every pulse throbbed with rapture. Her head was resting on his shoulder, her eyes were closed, her face was deadly pale, only the lips were crimson. A wild longing to press his own upon them took possession of him. His brain reeled.

Now he was on the narrow landing before her door, which opened directly upon the staircase.

“There is the key,” said Angiolina.

Jack opened the door and carried her across the threshold.

Twilight had already begun to render the outlines of every object indistinct; yet, on entering the little room, Jack received the impression of something inexpressibly touching, charming, despite its poverty. The odor of fresh flowers



greeted him. In one corner of the room stood her little bed,—a narrow iron bed. He laid her on it.

“I’ll send some one up to you at once,” he said, hastily.

Angiolina silently nodded.

He lingered a moment,—he expected her to say something. Perhaps——

But she did not speak. He kissed her hand and left the room.

When he had closed the door behind him it seemed as if he heard her sob.

Jack had a violent attack of industry. He now worked several hours every day at a study in the Park Monceau. A few of his artist acquaintances had discovered him thus occupied and made a tremendous ado over his sketch,—nothing save a bit of sunlight shining through the scanty leafage of early spring, and glimmering on a patch of green turf. But how warm and full of life the sunlight was, and what a strong breeze stirred the foliage! Jack was still very clumsy; in executing his work he sometimes lacked the most elementary tricks of art; but he possessed one thing which many an artist distinguished by various medals, who for years had had the right to decorate his picture-frames with H. C., might have envied: the art of animating everything his brush touched. This magic power, which separates the God-gifted artist from the artisan, Providence had bestowed upon him in his cradle.



The artists—who, as is well known, are appreciative of the work of their colleagues—all lavished their favorite epithets upon Jack's performance, called it *crâne* and *drôle*; nay, in addition to this, the American art-dealer whose demand had been hanging over Jack's head like the sword of Damocles declared himself ready to resign his claim to the marine pictures in favor of this Park Monceau study on condition that Jack would convert it into a picture by the addition of some pretty figures. He had asked Monsieur Sylvain to advise him concerning this addition, and the latter had promised to come to the park expressly to see the "marvel of a study," in which, thanks to the great outcry made by the artists, he was cordially interested.

Jack had expected him the day before, impatiently and vainly; to-day he did not even think of him. His study absorbed him entirely.

"*Tonnerre!*" he suddenly heard some one exclaim behind him, and, turning, saw Monsieur Sylvain.

With a throbbing heart Jack awaited the master's criticism.

Monsieur Sylvain drew down the corners of his mouth. "H'm! So this is the famous study!" he began, caustically. "H'm! h'm!"

"What do you say to it?" asked Jack, dejectedly.

"What shall I say?—it's very green," grumbled Sylvain. "But that seems to be the fashion now. You follow the fashion,—you are right."



He paused, then soon after sat down before the study on the stool from which Jack had started at the master's appearance. "Give me your palette."

Jack handed it to him, whereupon Monsieur Sylvain pitilessly began to extinguish the sunshine with heavy asphalt tones, while poor Jack looked on helplessly.

Suddenly Sylvain glanced up from his work of destruction and, pushing his hat farther back than usual, he asked, bluntly, "Deuce take it, Ferrars, why don't you marry your cousin?"

"Does my study present so melancholy a proof of my lack of talent that you want to force a life-preserver upon me?" asked Jack, not without irritation.

"There can be no doubt of your talent," replied Sylvain; then, with a gesture towards the study, he added: "Personally I have no special taste for lettuce, but, if lettuce is wanted, it must be owned that yours is specially fresh and juicy. You have something in your stroke, in the way of putting on the colors, which cannot be learned. But, my dear fellow, you will never accomplish anything more, and therefore I ask again, Why don't you marry your cousin? She is very pretty."

"The magnetic attraction is lacking," Jack answered, with a rather clumsy effort to jest.

Monsieur Sylvain looked him sharply in the eye. "That is, you don't feel it; and your cousin?"

"I am completely ignorant of my cousin's feelings," replied Jack.

"H'm! really! Of the feelings of a cousin



who comes to Paris to learn to paint because she has a cousin there who also paints!"

"You have invented the *because*, Monsieur Sylvain," Jack answered, somewhat harshly.

"No, I *discovered* it," replied the Frenchman; "but don't take the trouble to get angry. I understand you. I know that, in some cases, a man's delicacy forbids him to be sharp-sighted. H'm! In short, you—don't care for your cousin."

"I feel the highest esteem for her."

"That is enough."

"Confound it!" Jack retorted, somewhat hotly, "esteem is necessary, but esteem alone cannot bestow happiness. Esteem, if I may so express it, is the skeleton of love. The nobler the skeleton, the more secure, the more permanent, the beauty of the feeling. But imagine a love that is nothing except bones. Cupid as a skeleton,—horrible! I always imagine him a curly-headed little rogue with plenty of dimples."

"That idea is like mine," Monsieur Sylvain acknowledged; "but I have already told you that, in my opinion, the little rogue has not much to do with marriage."

"I beg leave to have a different opinion."

"Indeed—really—h'm!—I'm sorry for you," said Monsieur Sylvain, shrugging his shoulders.

"And why?"

"Because you are an incorrigible idealist, and your idealism will always meddle in matters with which it has nothing to do. Stop,"—he leaned back a little,—“I've spoiled your picture. Your



way of looking at nature doesn't agree with mine. Wipe the mustard-sauce off the salad! And farewell for a while."

"But you were going to advise me about the figures," Jack said, dispiritedly.

"About the figures—— The nearest suggestion is always the best," replied Monsieur Sylvain, grandiloquently. "Look around you!" With these words he hobbled off.

Jack looked around him for a suggestion.

A married couple sat close beside him. The man thin and haggard, with a limp straw hat and trousers far too short for him, which crept up above the gaiter-shoes bulging out around his ankles, was holding a large illustrated volume open on his knees; the wife, considerably his senior, had no front teeth; her thin light hair was brushed smoothly back; her dress was neat, though shabby, and she was evidently the more oppressed by anxiety of the two. She sat by his side darning underclothing, while a pale, rickety child played in the sand at her feet. A large plane-tree, whose foliage was still transparent, cast its shade over the trio.

Jack knew these people,—they came every day. The man was a clerk who had lost his place three months before. He spent his leisure time in studying the literature of George Sand, which had become very cheap, especially at the antiquarian book-stores.

This was no group for Jack's picture. A little farther away sat two mulatto women with very



bright kerchiefs, one in a green, the other in a yellow gown. Both were knitting, knitting so rapidly that instead of needles one saw in their hands merely a grayish-blue glitter. Three elaborately-dressed children were playing near them. Then came a nurse dressed in red from head to foot; then a police-officer in a blue coat with shining buttons. Then he saw Luca Canini, whom he had ordered to come at a certain hour to carry his luggage back. Jack laid down his palette, gave Luca his directions, said a few pleasant words to the impoverished married couple, and left the park. He had no engagement for the evening and wondered what to do with his leisure. He longed to leave the houses behind him and go somewhere into the country. His long limbs bore him swiftly across the Champs Elysées to the nearest landing-place of the "Hirondelle." The ship was just starting; he went on board, took a seat with his back to the guards, and enjoyed the warm mist rising from the Seine and the soft, grayish-green silvery coloring of the landscape on the left bank. It was not yet a real country landscape, only a vanishing suburb, a few rows of puny, transparent trees, principally poplars, behind which glimmered the dazzling white, the unbroken orange-red of freshly roofed new buildings,—a whirlwind of lime-dust, heaps of bricks and sand, trampled grass, and in the background the sea of houses of Paris, towering in a labyrinth of outlines from amid a violet chaos, amid which glimmered and sparkled a fairy-like vision: the ball of the dome of the



Invalides, steeped in the radiance of the westering sun.

The passengers on the "Hirondelle" belonged to the lowest class of the Parisian populace. But Jack was not one of the persons who turn up their noses at the commonplace character of their surroundings when they pay twenty cents for a trip on an excursion steamer. On the contrary, he rejoiced that so many people could enjoy a pleasant afternoon for so little money. Only it was disagreeable to have his left-hand neighbor eat sausages strongly flavored with garlic, and his right-hand one smoke a very malodorous pipe and spit with great regularity.

He looked for another seat, and came upon a group of intelligent but dingy-looking women, whom he instantly recognized as female art-students from the left bank of the Seine. They were all gazing intently in the same direction. Following their eyes, Jack perceived a famous historical painter, with a handsome Spanish face, who, evidently perfectly aware of the impression he made upon the girls, was looking away from them and, leaning idly against the guards, posed as a blasé *beau ténébreux*.

The sight of the art-students affected Jack more unpleasantly than the society of the unattractive common people from which he had fled. They all looked so downcast, so physically and morally famished. He turned from the human beings to the shore, which was now becoming more and more beautiful.



What luxuriant meadows! the grass growing knee-high in lush verdure, interspersed with flowers, stretched down to the very edge of the river, where it mingled with a net-work of white and yellow water-lilies. What willows, gigantic, fully developed, glimmering with a silvery hue, their pliant branches dipping into the waves! and behind them other trees, tall, slender elms and ashes, the outlines of their branches edged with a line of gold and steeped in the sunny spring vapor. Yes, this was lovely, this was charming. Jack's eyes sought a spot where he could begin his next study, and noticed a foot-path glimmering whitely through the rich meadow-grass, which led to a little wood. Two young people were walking down it. An indescribable feeling stole over Jack. He suddenly seemed to experience increased vitality, a pleasant warmth and restlessness.

He looked up,—the art-students had disappeared; Angiolina was sitting opposite to him. Jack crimsoned. Then his eyes met the Italian's; a great wave of joy mingled with embarrassment surged over him; he raised his hat. She smiled, and, without knowing what he was doing or even that he did it, he rose and went to her. Angiolina kindly extended her hand. He raised it to his lips and sat down by her side.

“Are you no longer angry with me?” he asked, smiling pleasantly.

“Why should I be?” she said. “On the contrary, I am very grateful.”

“For what?” he asked.



"For what?" Angiolina repeated, looking up at him. What eyes she had! Her glance thrilled every nerve. "For saving me from that vicious dog; for inquiring about my health so kindly and providing me with amusement during the time that I was confined to my room; for the books and flowers which you have sent me; for—doing what you have done."

"I had much for which to atone," he murmured.

She gazed intently at him. "Yes, on account of that insult. Well, you really were not so much to blame for making the blunder. But it humbled me so. You will not believe me, but it was the first time a stranger ever ventured to speak to me."

"Not believe you! Why shouldn't I believe you? I believe everything you say to me," Jack eagerly protested; "and I am not surprised. The only thing which amazes me is that I could have been so insolent. Have you forgiven me?" He spoke so warmly, so earnestly, that the tone would have melted a lump of ice.

"Must I tell you so?" she asked.

"Yes, tell me; it would afford me so much pleasure to hear you say it," he urged.

"You act like a child begging for a bonbon," replied the Marchesina.

"I *am* begging for a bonbon," Jack answered, quietly. "Have you forgiven me? Then tell me so!" He held out his hand.

She placed hers in it. "Yes, for aught I care,—I have forgiven you," she said.



Her voice sounded weary. She was even paler than usual, but there was greater warmth in the pallor; her lips were a richer scarlet, and looked fuller than usual. A strange, subdued radiance sparkled in her half-closed eyes. It seemed as if she was thinking of something, asking herself a question. Jack was so absorbed in gazing at her that he forgot to talk.

It was Angiolina who first broke the silence. "You must think me very fanciful," she said, after a pause.

He did not clearly understand her.

"I mean in my behavior to the artists," she added.

"You do make things rather hard for them," he said, half smiling.

"Yes, but I can do nothing else; it is difficult to choose exactly the right course. If you knew how hard it is to maintain a little dignity in my position, you would not wonder at my rudeness."

"I wonder at nothing," he eagerly protested, "except—that you are *in* this position, which is not suited to you."

Angiolina frowned. Jack felt that he had touched a very sore spot. He was sorry to have wounded her, strove to find something to say, but in vain. It was she who began:

"What is a poor, uneducated woman to do to earn her bread?" she inquired.

"You do not give the impression of an uneducated woman," he replied.

Angiolina smiled,—his words evidently pleased



her; then, shrugging her shoulders, she said, in her deep, pleasant voice, the voice which always recalled the tone of old Italian violins, "Yet it is true; I lack almost every detail of the education which a poor girl needs to make life easier; of the culture which, on the other hand, serves to make her lot still harder, I possess a tolerable share."

There was a subtlety in the remark which surprised Jack. The mystery surrounding her deepened.

A slight flush had tinged her cheeks, her face expressed stern, almost angry pride. She drew herself up as if to shake off a burden which had oppressed her for years, then continued: "What have I learned? To speak French, a smattering of English, just enough skill in playing the piano to accompany a little song, and—to reckon up to a hundred, and take care of my hands. I cannot spell any language correctly, and—the rest of my acquirements are equally worthless. Seek amid this treasury of knowledge any one thing by which five pennies can be earned."

"True," Jack murmured; "but at least the knowledge is unusual for——"

"For a model," she said, bitterly, "of course."

"It is the average amount of knowledge possessed by a young lady."

"Yes," she replied, "the knowledge of a *contessina*, who is expected at seventeen to marry a wealthy husband and do nothing all the rest of her life except to revise the *menus* her cook presents, wear beautiful gowns, and please fashionable



men. That is the object for which I was reared,—and yet—you know my life!”

“It is terrible!” Jack murmured, compassionately. “And can nothing be done,—can no one help you?”

“Help!” She uttered the word in a tone so weary, so hopeless, that it pierced the young man’s heart. “Help! What help can be given? I try to get whatever solace is possible; I read a great deal. Once I took lessons in French and English; but then—well, then I said to myself, what could I accomplish even if I supplied the greatest defects in my education? The utmost would be a position as sub-teacher in a boarding-school. And even that—who can tell? Just think,—a girl who has been a model! I have given up that idea; I am submitting to my fate. Although my life is not brilliant, it is bearable,—the work is not hard, the payment is good. I am independent. I can go to the theatre often; now and then I have a pleasant chat with the artists, from whom I earn my bread. Besides, I have succeeded in securing from them the kind of treatment I desire. It was no easy matter, but I have accomplished it.” She threw her head back proudly.

“I believe in the eighth wonder of the world since I have known you, Marchesina,” Jack murmured; and added, in a low tone, “If you knew how I long to kneel at your feet,—how touching and sacred a woman like you is to a man.”

Angiolina gazed at him with a strange expression; suddenly her eyes grew very gloomy, a bitter,



almost disagreeable expression hovered around her lips.

“Perhaps not quite so sacred as you suppose,” she murmured; “it is merely because I shrink from it all.”

The words pierced Jack’s soul like an ugly discord; they did not suit the image he had formed of the Marchesina, and they came from the girl’s lips as if rising from a gulf of repulsive experiences. But his discomfort lasted only a moment ere it was forgotten. He was too deeply in love for it to linger.

Angiolina drew a long breath of intense enjoyment as her eyes wandered over the green shore of the Seine. “How beautiful life might be!” she murmured.

The steamer stopped. “Meudon!” some one shouted, “Bas-Meudon!”

Angiolina rose.

“Are you going to leave the boat here?” asked Jack.

“I had no definite purpose,” she replied. “I merely wanted to breathe the spring air somewhere outside of Paris. But this is a very pretty place,—just see!” She pointed to a row of small, old-fashioned houses, almost all adorned with wooden balconies and half buried in blooming glycine.

“I should like to stop here,” she said; “I should enjoy walking across these meadows and into yonder wood.” While speaking, she went towards the gangway of the boat.

“May I come too?” asked Jack, timidly, behind her.



She only glanced back at him over her shoulder with a smile.

The soft fading hues of a spring evening, melting slowly into a violet-gray fog, were already hovering over the meadows when the pair—Jack and Angiolina—returned from their walk to the primitive little town. Although the smile with which she had permitted him to accompany her had seemed like a challenge, not the faintest advance towards familiarity had been made by Jack during the long walk across the silent, lonely meadows and through the shady, whispering grove.

Was this due to his companion or to him? Probably mainly to him, to the indestructible idealism with which he viewed the situation.

He had wandered at her side almost in silence through the slowly dying twilight, the warm, caressing atmosphere of spring. Mute, with the reflective speechlessness of a gradually maturing resolution.

She, too, had said very little; only a few words now and then as she laughed about the bouquet of flowers, which grew larger and larger in her hands.

When its proportions became too enormous, he took it from her. She gathered another. And now the sun had set, a chill, damp breeze swept across the meadow. They bent their steps towards the little town.

“How hungry I am!” Angiolina exclaimed.

Jack turned towards her. “Will you have supper here?” he asked.



“It would be charming,” she said, quickly.

They chose the most inviting glycine-embowered balcony of the modest inns on the primitive quay, with a view of the Seine. There they sat down on a tiny veranda, whose roof was formed really only by a wooden balcony jutting out above it. It had already grown so dark that the lamps were lighted.

While they were awaiting the little repast selected by Jack with the utmost care, Angiolina arranged the flowers.

A thick garland of heavy clusters of glycine fell over the lower edge of the balcony; the flowers grew in close clusters, interrupted by a tangle of light-green leafage. Both foliage and blossoms looked strangely pale in the flickering light of the lamps fastened against the wall of the house. The pair inhaled the damp breath of the river, saturated with the acrid odor of the young leaves, the scent of freshly-hewn logs, which lay in great piles on the quay, and the faint sweetness of the glycine. They heard the low plash of the waves against the shore, the rustling of the trees in the adjacent wood, while with these sounds blended the melody of a song sung by several voices,—one of those monotonous French ballads with a refrain in a minor key. Lads and lassies strolled arm in arm along the quay, jesting and whispering together, moving in the direction whence came, now more faintly, anon louder, the melancholy song, “*Qu’as-tu fait, qu’as-tu fait de ta jeunesse ?*”

Angiolina had stopped arranging her flowers



and was listening. Then stepping forward, she bent her head to hear more distinctly.

It seemed to Jack that never in his whole life had he beheld anything more beautiful than the young Italian as she stood with her pallid, yearning face beneath the waving bunches of lilac blossoms, and he also told himself how lamentably Armand Sylvain's old-fashioned art was baffled by the problem of this beauty.

"Ah, if only I might paint a picture of you!" he said, softly, approaching her.

"Then why don't you?" she asked, looking up at him.

"Would you sit for me?"

"Whenever you wish."

"Really! How happy you make me!" He clasped her hand and pressed his lips upon it. She withdrew it, though she smiled, the slow, mournful smile which was always accompanied by downcast lids. It gave her face an almost magical charm.

"What hour shall we appoint for the first sitting?" asked Jack.

"It is for Monsieur to command; the poor model will submit to his wishes," replied Angiolina, jestingly.

"Are you no longer engaged by Sylvain?"

"No. Monsieur Sylvain finished with me long ago. During the last week he has been painting the spring into his picture. At first I brought him fresh flowers to lend it a little life. But the green confused him, and finally he copied the whole



array of vernal blossoms from a heap of old dusty artificial flowers with which he decorated his studio for an artists' ball twenty years ago, and has kept ever since in a pasteboard box with faded German favors and torn silk socks. You can imagine the spring."

Jack laughed. How pleasant it was to talk with her, how bright and amusing she was,—a girl in such a position!

Just at that moment a waiter set a golden-hued omelette on the table.

They took their seats opposite to each other. Angiolina was really hungry, but she was as graceful in eating as in everything else. Hunger suited her charmingly. The omelette was followed by roast chicken and lettuce. Jack carved the chicken and helped his bewitching guest. He himself scarcely touched a mouthful.

"One more little bit," he urged, coaxingly, lifting a wing of the chicken.

"No, no! Nothing more now," she replied. "But how delicious it was! And how pleasant it was to be able to talk while I was eating! Ah, if you knew the dreariness of simply devouring a beefsteak or a chop alone, or during the intermission of a sitting in the society of an artist from whom——"

The surging and dashing of the waves announced the approach of the steamer from Sevrès.

Angiolina rose. "It is growing late."

"We haven't arranged any hour yet," said Jack.

"I cannot come to-morrow."



"The day after, then?" He gazed beseechingly at her.

"We will see." She smiled at him, at the same time taking her bunch of flowers.

"Aha! I congratulate you!" cried a deep, gruff voice.

Jack looked up and saw Armand Sylvain with an acquaintance whom the young Englishman had made in Cayeux, the journalist Rambert, who had just stepped upon the little veranda.

Both gentlemen were smiling cynically; a scornful expression disfigured the old artist's face, which was flushed with excitement.

"Monsieur Sylvain!" cried Jack, "how can you allow yourself——"

"Allow myself to do what? Keep my eyes open? It was an accident, my dear fellow, an accident. If anybody had warned me in time, I would have shut them or turned my head away, though it would have been a pity, for you made a very pretty picture. Love is always becoming to a beautiful woman,—one can't say quite as much for men, who generally look rather stupid under such circumstances; but item——"

"Monsieur Sylvain!" cried Jack again; then he interrupted himself to look for Angiolina.

"You will seek her in vain," said the journalist; "she went on board the steamer and is already on her way to Paris. It will be half an hour ere you can follow her."

"At present I am less anxious to do that than to explain to you how I have happened to expose a



perfectly blameless girl to unwarrantable suspicions by my selfish thoughtlessness. I swear to you——”

“Swear nothing,” replied Rambert; “you would prove very little by doing so, for we all know that there are cases where perjury is a point of honor. Only, don’t you think it is carrying matters a little too far,—for a model? The affair is normal, perfectly normal.”

While speaking he laid his hand kindly on Jack’s shoulder. But the latter shook it rudely off.

“I have borne enough!” he cried, stamping his foot angrily. “As neither of you choose to believe me, I will take no further trouble to assure you that I have not exchanged a word of love with Angiolina. But one thing I will tell you: should she accept the offer of my hand, she will become my wife. There! And now I have the honor to bid you both good-evening.”

After this significant remark Jack raised his hat and marched with long strides into the darkness.

Rambert and Sylvain took possession of the table which Jack and Angiolina had just left.

Rambert began to whistle; Armand Sylvain laughed, harshly, bitterly. At last, striking the table with both clinched fists, he exclaimed, “The deuce! What do you say to that?”

“I think, as I have already said, that the affair is perfectly normal,” replied Rambert, humorously.

“Oh, yes, normal, normal! But did you ever conceive of such an affected, pretentious piece as that Italian creature is! So sanctimonious! What does it mean?”



“It means that she took no fancy to either of us,” replied Rambert, coolly.

The night air grew damper and cooler, the scent of the spring foliage more acrid. The lapping and plashing of the waves and the rustling of the trees in the neighboring wood still echoed from the distance, and blending with it in wailing notes indistinct snatches floated to their ears of the ballad with its minor refrain, “*Qu’as-tu fait, qu’as-tu fait de ta jeunesse ?*”

Jack’s first walk the next morning of course took him to the Marchesina. She was not at home. She had an appointment with a sculptor—so the shop-woman on the ground-floor told him—who was modelling a head of Ophelia.

The great stress laid upon the assurance that Angiolina had sat for the head, only for the head of Ophelia, annoyed Jack, as well as the fact that she was posing for a sculptor. Sculptors do not enjoy a very good reputation.

He left the shop and strolled out into the narrow street, where second-hand shops in which broken new articles were sold for antiques alternated with dressmaking shops where old clothes were remodelled. Every third woman he met was rouged.

“Was it possible that a miracle had been wrought in his behalf, and Angiolina had remained unsullied even in this corrupting atmosphere ?” he asked himself.

About thirty paces from the house in which the Italian lived Rambert met him, gay as ever, clad



in a loose sack-coat, with a straw hat pushed somewhat far back on his head.

“Good-morning; how are you?” he called. “I suppose you are coming from the Marchesina, eh?—if it’s a fair question, my dear fellow, if it’s a fair question.”

Jack thought this careless “if it’s a fair question” insolent; he was vexed by the journalist’s familiar address,—everything annoyed him to-day. But, with his habitual truthfulness, he answered, frankly,—

“I have been to her house. After yesterday’s scene, the least I could do was to seek her. She was not at home. She had an appointment for a sitting.”

“Yes, she is working for Boutin,” replied Rambert. Then he walked at Jack’s side for a time in silence. At last he began,—

“H’m! Ferrars, do you still intend to offer yourself to Angiolina?”

Jack hesitated a moment, only a moment, then he said, very gruffly,—

“Of course I do.”

“Indeed!” remarked Rambert.

“Don’t try to dissuade me,” Jack cried, angrily; “it would be futile.”

A pause ensued, then Rambert began again: “It really is no concern of mine.”

“I think so too,” growled Jack, indignantly.

The Frenchman smiled good-naturedly, then he went on: “If we see a blind man walking along the edge of a precipice, it really is no concern of



ours, but we involuntarily stretch out a hand to draw him back. I can't help stretching out my hand to you, Ferrars. Whether you decide to marry a model or not is certainly your own affair; but don't marry the model on false premises. Inquire a little more particularly into the private life of your inamorata."

"What is there to inquire about?" cried Jack. "I did seek information in all the studios of Paris, in the days before she became too sacred for me to watch her distrustfully. I heard nothing save the best reports. Her conduct to me has tenfold confirmed everything good which has been told me. She is a wonderful creature. I shall be proud if she accepts my hand. My only regret is that I cannot offer her, with my name, a brilliant destiny."

Jack spoke with great ardor and a little too much determination; as it were, with a shade of defiance. He himself was perfectly aware that a chill was stealing over his enthusiasm.

The Frenchman glanced keenly at him.

"Listen, Ferrars," he replied. "What you are saying is very noble and chivalrous, but it will not stand the test. That Angiolina's conduct during her residence in Paris—which has now lasted two years—has been beyond reproach is undeniable. But what was her previous life? I have never before given it a thought, now doubts press upon me. What was her life prior to the last two years? What is the cause of her reserve?"

"Rambert, you are brutal! I can't tolerate this!" cried Jack.



“Gently, my dear fellow,” said the Frenchman, soothingly laying his hand upon Jack’s arm. “You took no advantage of the situation at Meudon, I believe. But, as matters are, I think you disappointed Angiolina. She is well versed in the ways of the world, and knows exactly where to double a cape. I believed in her; it amused me to do so. I assure you that we prosaic men, whose daily experience of life forces us to be cynical, find it very refreshing to be able to believe in miracles. But that is all over. She is not so specially virtuous, she is only fastidious. During these two years she has probably been recovering from some overwhelming sense of disgust, which led her to fly from Italy. You have had the good fortune to please her fancy better than the rest of us,—that is perfectly natural. I feel no resentment against her for liking you, and cordially wish you every happiness, but it robs her of the halo. My dear Ferrars, don’t be overhasty. Why call in a priest?”

This was too much for Jack. He rushed impetuously past the Frenchman, with his little hard felt hat—he had never adopted the picturesque head-gear of his guild—pulled low over his eyes, his short walking-stick under his arm, and his hands thrust into the pockets of his coat.

Why was every word that Rambert had said so horribly plausible?

The remainder of the day Jack spent alone and ill-humored in his studio, trying to form some sensible plan for his future. But the effort was vain.



He was vexed with himself, vexed with everything, most of all that he could reach no conclusion.

The shadows had already grown very long when he went to Angiolina's house the second time. Without inquiring whether she was at home or not, he silently ascended the stairs, with his eyes fixed upon vacancy. It was a horrible staircase, with slippery, slanting steps, winding in a dizzy spiral around a dark hole.

Jack remembered how he had carried Angiolina—it was scarcely a week ago—over these same slippery, sloping steps to her little room. He felt the pressure of her warm round arms about his neck, the faint perfume from her hair floated about him. Every pulse was throbbing to his very fingertips. Just at that moment—what was that?—a sweet, wailing note floated down to him from above through the close, confined air of the staircase,—a melancholy Italian song, which he had heard yesterday at Meudon, sung by a weak but unusually musical voice. He stopped—listened. Another air began; sweet, mysterious, delightful as the fragrance of flowers amid the hot breath of the sirocco, it floated tremulously down to him. He glided noiselessly up to the fifth floor. The door of Angiolina's little room was ajar; he could look in unnoticed. She was sitting at a small piano, running her hands over its keys.

The beauty of these hands was marvellous, but even more wonderful was the loveliness of the pale profile.



Jack had paused on the threshold, but Angiolina must have felt his gaze. She looked up.

“May I come in?” he asked.

“Certainly,” she answered, simply. “I expected you.”

Ere he was aware of it he was kneeling beside her on the hard yellow painted floor, clasping both her hands in his. “Oh, my angel!” he exclaimed, covering them with kisses. “If you knew how horrible yesterday’s scene was to me, how I grieved over the false light in which my thoughtlessness had placed you!”

“*Your* thoughtlessness had placed *me*?” she repeated, gently. “Did you really suppose that it had not entered my mind that such a thing might happen, when I remained there with you?”

“Angiolina!” he cried, almost terrified, “you had really reflected in advance——”

“Certainly,” she answered. “I knew what people would say. But what do I care,—I? So long as the one man whom I love thinks well of me, everything else is a matter of indifference,—the opinion of men and the judgment of God!” While speaking she bent towards him and, taking his head between her hands, kissed him on the forehead.

He threw his arms around her, clasping her closely to his heart. “My bride!” he murmured, “my sweet, glorious wife!”

He felt her shiver in his hold.

“Your wife?” she repeated, slowly, as if she could not trust her ears.



“Do you imagine that I had any other thought?” he whispered, tenderly, deeply agitated.

Angiolina’s head had drooped on his shoulder, —she made no reply.

Jack glanced around the little room, where everything was so tasteful, and to which its very bareness lent one charm the more. Tears sprang to his eyes as they wandered over the touching evidences of poverty visible in the decorations of the humble apartment. Suddenly, in the midst of his warm, generous emotion, stole the chill of cold distrust which had tortured him all day, creeping through every limb, and clutching his throat. It would not be silenced; he must look it in the face, do battle with it, slay it once for all.

“My jewel,” he murmured, “I know that you have lived two years in Paris under the most difficult circumstances in which so beautiful a girl could be placed. No one even dares to utter a light word about you. They do not understand you, but they bend the knee in homage. Lina!—for heaven’s sake do not be angry with me,—forgive me the question: Was it always so? The words will not cross my lips in your presence. Let me ask only this: Has any man ever called you his?”

If he had seen her! She had blanched to the very lips, with a livid pallor. Her eyes expressed unutterable horror and yet a longing for happiness, which would not be controlled.

For an instant she hesitated, then said, harshly but distinctly, “Never!”

“I was sure of it! I knew it!” Jack cried,



exultingly, covering her face with kisses. "Forgive me! forgive me!"

She made no reply save to cling closer to him, returning his kisses.

At that moment the door opened.

"*Milli scusi!* Pray don't let me disturb you," cried a hoarse voice, the voice of a drunkard. Jack turned. He had no other thought than that some artist had entered to engage Angiolina for a sitting.

But if it was an artist, he was a very disreputable-looking fellow, and a total stranger to Jack. He stood framed in the door-way, a man of middle height, his hat, a soft, light-gray felt, very dirty, and encircled with a wide, greasy black band, on his head. Blue-black hair hung in thick locks around his pale face to the collar of his coat. The brow, eyes, and nose were unususally fine in their contours, with the classic beauty usually seen only in antique statues and among Greeks and Neapolitans; even the mouth, which a beard and moustache twisted into points at the ends freely displayed, so that the full sharply-cut lips were plainly visible, had a touch of majesty in its coarseness.

The man's clothing was shabby and almost repulsively spotted; numerous buttons were missing from his coat and vest; his shirt was yellow and ragged, and his trousers were tattered at the bottom. A faded bright red kerchief was knotted about his throat. He looked as dissipated as possible,—repulsively degraded, yet degraded nevertheless. No one would ever have numbered him among the lower classes.



"Pray don't let me disturb you," as Jack rose mechanically; "pray don't." He laughed cynically; then turning towards the Marchesina, said, "Lina! Lina! Pardon me! It really was not intentional."

Drops of perspiration stood on Jack's forehead. Had he suddenly gone mad? With an effort he turned his eyes from the stranger to Angiolina, who sat with clasped hands and dilated eyes, an image of mute despair. "Who is he?" asked Jack, "who is he?" He fixed his tense gaze on Angiolina, who, burying her hands in her thick tresses, groaned,—

"My husband!"

A moment later the young Englishman was out of the room. He had understood but dimly; every emotion seemed paralyzed by intense loathing. Then he heard some one panting for breath behind him; icy hands clutched him. It was Angiolina who had followed, calling him amid her sobs. She dragged herself down to the next landing at his side; he could not shake her off. Once more she stretched her hands to him. He thrust her angrily, rudely back,—horror overpowered him.

Idealists are a very dangerous species of the human race. Whenever any specially exaggerated and impossible opinion which they have formed of any person is shattered against the cliffs of reality, they straightway go just as far in their scorn of the poor mortal as they formerly went in their deification.

For the moment not a vestige of Jack's enthusi-



astic adoration of Angiolina remained. He himself attributed the complete transformation in his feelings towards her to indignation aroused by the falsehood she had uttered. Well, the falsehood was unpleasant, but a confession of her true position, even though it had preceded her husband's appearance, would also have repelled Jack. The fact that she had been married for several years—as he afterwards learned—to this dissolute rascal, had permitted those insolent lips to kiss her, was unutterably repulsive. Had he known her secret before, perhaps he might have been content with what she could bestow; but this was not what he had expected. She had fallen from her pedestal. She was like all the rest, or at least like many others. He could not find words enough to revile his ridiculous credulity.

The day after this distasteful discovery he again met Rambert. Jack would have avoided him if possible, but the Frenchman had recognized him in the distance and was hurrying towards him, his face beaming with good-humored malice.

“I congratulate you, my dear fellow!” he exclaimed, extending his hand to Jack, “I congratulate you with all my heart! Fate has saved you from committing a great folly, Ferrars. But”—and he struck the young man heavily on the shoulder—“what do you say to the matter? I declared that she must have fled from something which disgusted her in Italy. I made the husband's acquaintance yesterday in the *Boule Noire*. A splendid specimen! The comical part of it is



that it is just as difficult to determine to what class of society he probably originally belonged as one finds it in the case of Angiolina. At first I took him for a street scavenger or railroad laborer, he was so sodden, so ragged and dirty,—not fit to touch with a pair of tongs! Yet, on the other hand, he speaks Italian in a way which is usually not heard except among cultivated people, and very passable French. He allows other people to pay for his liquor, spits on the floor, and then—suddenly scraps of knowledge fall from his lips, keen remarks which fairly startle one, and such sentences as, ‘Prince Massino told me one day.’ What do you say to it?”

“That it is extremely interesting to learn that Angiolina’s husband is on intimate terms with the Prince Massino.”

“Pshaw! In what a tone you speak; how tragically you take the matter!” said Rambert, wonderingly.

“Does that surprise you?” asked Jack, venomously. “Yet you are usually an excellent judge of human nature.”

“Am I not? I showed that yesterday,” replied Rambert, with a good-natured laugh. “Don’t take the matter so seriously,—you are fairly dazed. Why, my dear fellow, don’t you see that the affair has taken the most favorable turn for you possible? Things can be managed with Paolo Minelli! Now that I think of it, Ferrars,—it’s not a pleasant idea, but—I wonder if the whole interlude wasn’t planned by the husband and wife. H’m! H’m!



We were all so delighted with Angiolina's girlish expression,—and to think that she has been the mother of two children! It is said that both are dead."

When Rambert looked up, Jack had disappeared.

"An odd fellow," he murmured; "he really ought to be glad—glad."

Rambert considered himself a judge of human nature, and was so regarded by his acquaintances. Up to a certain point this was true. In nine cases out of ten he judged people accurately, and could predict what they would do in this or that situation. This resulted from his reliance, in all his calculations, upon their greed, sensuality, and weakness; in short, the lowest instincts of the average man. But in regard to an exceptional individual like Jack, his shallow penetration was baffled. The standard by which he measured mankind was too short. On such occasions he was puzzled, and at last, shaking his head, arrived at the conviction that the person for whom his standard was too short was too large, not that the standard was too small. A man like Jack was to him simply a sort of handsome monster, and the latter's exalted ideas evoked an indulgent smile as youthful immaturity, if he did not regard them as actual aberration of mind. On the whole, his sober view of affairs placed him on a better footing with mankind than Jack's crazy idealism.

As he expected little from mankind, he was rarely disappointed; he took people as he found



them. Indulgent without being aware of it, he felt at ease with mediocrity, and even understood how to accommodate himself to vulgarity when this vulgarity had a humorous side. As nectar and ambrosia are not to be had, he contented himself with the flesh-pots of Egypt.

Whereas Jack, on the contrary,—why, good heavens! he wanted nectar, and if he could not obtain it he was ready to die of thirst. At least this was his intention, though it is true he did not carry it into execution. Human nature is very obstinate, and sooner or later asserts its rights. Thirst will be quenched, and, if deprived of every other means of doing so, man will slake it in a bog.

Ah, if Jack had at least suffered from the current idealism which passes from one illusion to another! But this was by no means the case. He was laboring under a kind of sporadic, eruptive idealism, a condition from which he always awoke with a feeling of intense shame.

After his cheering conversation with Rambert he had fled to his studio, where he lay hour after hour, his head buried in a pillow, sobbing violently, with clinched fists. He was furiously enraged against the whole human race, and rebelled even against the Creator for having made it so contemptible.

After having raved thus for several hours, sobbing and grinding his teeth until he was fairly exhausted, he arrived at the conviction that such conduct was unworthy of him, and sought some occupation to divert his thoughts. Seating him-



self before his easel, he began with weary eyes and heavy hand to make some alterations in his Park Monceau study.

Just then some one knocked at the door. "Come in!" called Jack, looking up; but the palette almost dropped from his hand—Angiolina's husband entered.

He looked as dissolute as he did the day before, yet there was a touch of picturesqueness about him. He still wore a thick red kerchief round his neck, but held the dirty felt hat in his hand. Standing thus bare-headed, with his broad low brow, round which his long locks, parted in the centre, clung in the fashion of Raphael's "Violin Player," his face, spite of all the repulsive traces of vice stamped upon it, was fairly diabolical in its beauty.

Jack felt a keen pang of agony as the thought darted through his mind that Angiolina had once loved this scoundrel, clasped him in her soft arms, and kissed him with her red lips. A feeling of giddiness overwhelmed him. Meanwhile, Minelli advanced towards him, but paused at a certain distance, saying, "Pardon me, signore; my name is Paolo Minelli; in other respects the gentleman knows who I am."

"May I ask what brings you here?" said Jack, harshly.

"Something which perhaps may not be wholly unpleasant," returned Minelli, with a cynical smile which showed his sharp, even, white teeth. "Do you speak Italian?"



Jack remained silent. What could bring the fellow to him? he was wondering.

"I can use French also," the Italian went on, proving that he had perfect control of the language. "What I have to say can be briefly stated. We are both men of the world, who can understand each other without elaborate explanations."

Though Jack's nerves were strained to the utmost tension, the plural from the rascal's lips extorted a smile. "Men of the world!" The Italian, shrugging his shoulders, continued:

"Monsieur Ferrars does not appear to credit it, but I have seen better days. For a year all Italy was proud of me, then—ah, *tempi passati*, why recall it? I remember that time as little as possible. I am a philosopher and drink brandy. I am a philosopher. I've read a great many books in my day,—all forgotten with the rest; but one thing I do know still, that it is ruffianly to bind a woman against her will. It is not in harmony with modern ideas, and therefore I have released Angiolina. When she wished to leave me I permitted her to go. I expected what has happened, and came to ascertain the truth. Well, does not the gentleman understand?"

Jack stood as if rooted to the floor.

"I need money for my travelling expenses," the Italian added, laughing. "Three thousand francs will——"

He could not finish the sentence. Jack had rushed upon him, dealing a blow with his maulstick across his handsome, repulsive face. An evil



look darted from the Italian's dark eyes; grinding his teeth, he made a movement to throw himself upon Jack, but ere he was aware of it the young artist had seized him by the collar and flung him out of the door like a pile of loathsome rubbish.

For an instant the Italian remained motionless on his hands and knees before Jack's threshold. His head was confused, but in a moment he awoke from his bewilderment. His first clear thought was frantic, furious hate. He would fain have strangled Jack, but he knew that he was powerless against the Englishman's muscles of steel. He rose, and, passing his dirty hand slowly along the railing, descended the stairs. Spite of his degradation, there was still enough manhood lingering in his soul to make him enraged with himself, since he had reaped no profit from his baseness. His blood coursed like fire through his veins,—his throat seemed choked.

Suddenly he paused and struck his forehead. "My day will come," he muttered. "He loves her to distraction; such a feeling is not forgotten in a moment. Sooner or later he will follow her, and then——"

He clinched his teeth.

That very same evening a dirty, dissipated-looking man and an exquisitely beautiful woman were among the travellers assembled in the Gare de Lyon,—Angiolina and Paolo Minelli.

He had the law on his side; he had quietly informed her that he would have her dragged home



by the police if she did not go with him voluntarily.

She submitted to everything. She was like a machine, which can do nothing of its own volition, but must be set in motion by another's will. Minelli never lost sight of her. He dragged her along by the shoulder, gripped her firmly by the arm while they were waiting for the doors of the waiting-room to be opened, never relinquishing his hold until he pushed her into a dark, third-class carriage, reeking nauseously with the fumes of stale tobacco. Not until the train was in motion did she feel a terrible sense of anguish. With a hoarse, half-stifled cry she started up as if seeking some way of escape,—now when it was too late. Her husband seized her, forcing her back into her seat. Then the consciousness of her helplessness, her defencelessness, came over her, and with this consciousness apathy. The train groaned and roared,—away from him,—farther, farther away. It seemed as though it was dragging her into a dark, stifling, endless abyss. On, ever on, away from him,—away from him. She could not forget the gesture of loathing with which he had released himself from her on the stairs,—*he* from *her*, he who but a few moments before could find no words tender and sacred enough to express his feelings. Now it was all over! Why had she deceived him? Would everything have resulted differently if she had not uttered that lie? She asked herself the question again and again as we ask those queries to which no answer can be found. Ever on, on,



roaring in breathless haste,—away—away—away from him!

The fate which on the whole, if we judge it very favorably, treats us poor mortals like a dutiful step-mother, just but unloving, has always bestowed upon us one alleviating faculty, it has often blended a paralyzing element with our sufferings when they have become most poignant.

The crushing burden of our grief wearies us, and, when we deem it least possible, closes our eyes in slumber.

Angiolina fell asleep, sitting upright with her head resting against the hard, dirty corner of the carriage. Dreams visited her,—pleasant ones at first; but this did not last long, her anguish again awoke from its temporary lassitude. The consciousness of reality blended with her dreams, without any clearness of detail, only as a dull, mute torture everywhere present, growing ever more and more violent. May God have mercy upon us!

Then she awoke. It was already light. The pale-green morning sky, in which the last stars were fading, was visible through the dingy little window. Angiolina at first did not realize where she was, she had slept so soundly.

Beside her sat an old man who coughed incessantly and spit between his knees; opposite to him a little brown-skinned soldier, with very wide scarlet trousers, who was smoking a pipe on which an odalisque was painted and casting admiring glances at Angiolina through the cloud. Then came a



very fat woman, who was taking some provisions out of a red handkerchief, a young one with a baby, a field laborer, and a traveller of the better class.

The air was very close; the tobacco-smoke, the odors emanating from the human beings packed together so closely, made Angiolina ill. A feeling of inexpressible weariness and desolation overwhelmed her.

The last mists scattered before the dawning day, the light grew broader, the wretchedness of her position more distinct.

Her husband sat opposite watching her with triumphant cruelty.

Jack had resolved to take the matter of Angiolina's deception lightly, and simply kill by mockery the suffering caused by separation.

His knowledge of human nature had proved thoroughly insufficient; his idealism had become bankrupt: on that point he was certain. To give others no reason to laugh at him, he must anticipate them and laugh at himself. This he did, whenever opportunity offered, with great energy and very tenacious persistency. Meanwhile, he wore a bold front, and, as he did not succeed in killing his despair by mockery so quickly as he had expected, he resorted to all sorts of violent means, plunging into the midst of the wildest amusements of Parisian bachelors. He who, hitherto, had never exceeded a certain normal standard of youthful frivolity, now vied with the most reckless. He seemed to be actually trying to



bring himself to the lowest depths, which, with due perseverance, as we all know, can be accomplished even by the strongest. That in doing so he not only trampled underfoot the talents bestowed by God, but also squandered, in the most senseless manner, the last remnant of his property,—nay, not even content with that, stretched his credit beyond all the bounds of good principle,—mattered nothing. The only thing that seriously troubled him was his failure to find in the bottom of the beaker, which he so eagerly drained, the forgetfulness he sought.

“Aha! How are you? I am delighted to see you again!”

It was Armand Sylvain who uttered the words, as Jack entered his studio two weeks after Angiolina's departure.

The old artist's appearance that day was by no means prepossessing. His face was redder and more bloated than usual, his eyes were bloodshot, his flabby red underlip trembled. The two points of his moustache were twisted upward nearly to his temples, and the tall silk hat which he wore, even in his studio, to protect his eyes from the light, was cocked jauntily over his left ear.

Yet the old man looked defiant and arrogant, could not sit still a moment, and hobbled, leaning on a cane, from one easel to another. Ever and anon he uttered an oath, as one of his tender feet came in contact with some hard object. Meanwhile, he glanced constantly at Jack as if expect-



ing something,—the meed of praise tendered to every artist when one visits his studio.

But to-day Jack was too lazy or too weary to lie,—he said nothing. Vexed by his silence, Monsieur Sylvain peevishly exclaimed, “H’m! How forlorn you look! Haven’t you consoled yourself yet for the loss of Angiolina,—or what is it?”

“Angiolina!” Jack repeated, dryly. “Do you really imagine that I am still thinking of that deceitful creature? The bare idea!” He flung himself into a low chair, stretched his long limbs out in front of him, and thrust his thumbs into the arm-holes of his vest.

“Pshaw! You were always fairly daft over that woman,” cried Sylvain, “and it couldn’t have been agreeable when the tyrant snatched the sweet fruit from your lips.”

“Indeed,—did he?” murmured Jack, with an unpleasant smile, which had formerly never rested on his face. “You are slightly mistaken if that is your opinion, Monsieur Sylvain. Shall I tell you the truth? The tyrant—I presume you allude to Angiolina’s estimable husband—the tyrant offered to return to Italy for three thousand francs, and I wouldn’t pay it.”

“Indeed,—h’m! You thought the sum too large?” jeered Sylvain.

“No; too small,” replied Jack, knocking the ashes from the end of his cigar with his little finger. “We value happiness only when we can have an opportunity to pay more than its value; we seek to win it by lavishing all we possess, and



when it is offered for a song we no longer care for it,—nay, we disdain it.”

Jack said all this in a dry tone, with an affectation of humorousness, but without raising his eyes. A pause ensued.

“You are a fool,” Monsieur Sylvain began at last. “You ought to have grasped it.”

“That is a matter of opinion,” replied Jack, shrugging his shoulders, and stretching his legs still farther in front of him.

“Pshaw!” growled Sylvain, “nothing in the world is so torturing as a joy which we have slain instead of tasting it. Believe me, on your death-bed you will think of a pleasure you have foregone.”

As Jack remained persistently silent, Sylvain as persistently endeavored to irritate him. “What do you say to your knowledge of human nature?” he exclaimed.

“How so?” escaped Jack’s lips.

“How? How? You were eager to believe Angiolina a Jeanne d’Arc. Remember what a face you made when I once ventured to suggest that she might be a widow? And now it turns out—— It’s enough to make one kill one’s self laughing; it is indeed. Who does this saint prove to be? A girl of good family who, when barely sixteen, ran away with this Minelli, who at that time was her music-teacher. Ha! ha! ha! It’s enough to make one die of laughing; don’t you think so?”

“No, I don’t; it is a wretched, loathsome business!” cried Jack. “I wish you good-morning!”



He rose and turned towards the door.

Monsieur Sylvain stopped him. "No, no, stay; the matter is ended; I'll say no more about it. At heart I was really more in love with Angiolina than you were. I—to me she was the genius of my artistic regeneration. I thought she would aid me to accomplish something really great, but—nonsense! a withered tree cannot be made to put forth blossoms a second time. You know how I regarded my *Vestal in Spring*,—a work of the first order,—all Paris would bow before it. Well, I finished the picture to my own complete satisfaction. I placed it on exhibition at Petit's in the Rue de Sèze. The newspapers made an outcry about my work. At first I kept away from Petit's,—everybody has his little touches of vanity. When I believed myself sure of success, perfectly sure, I went to Petit's; I thought—ha! ha! ha!—I should have an ovation, that people would whisper to one another, 'There goes Sylvain, the first artist of his time, a classic painter,'—ha! ha! ha!—that there would be crowds before my picture. And what do you suppose happened? My painting was not hanging alone in Petit's gallery: he had arranged a small *élite* exhibition,—*élite* exhibition; that's what he called it. What sort of paintings were they? At the first moment I saw nothing but violet, orange, and green spots,—all the colors of the rainbow boldly huddled together,—among them my *Vestal*, somewhat dark, but so grave, so majestic, a feast to the eyes, on which they could rest with pleasure from the mad riot of color sur-



rounding it. I rubbed my hands. Not a soul was there. I had gone early. Then by degrees the people came in. My Vestal hung in the place of honor opposite to the entrance; at first she was concealed by the red sofa in the centre of the gallery. I was annoyed, because it shut out the view of my painting. 'Well, my turn will come,' I said to myself. Methodical visitors who entered began at No. 1. How slowly they moved! Some of the daubers detained them a long time. There is one fellow named Jeanninot, and another called Claude Monet,—a landscape-painter,—and still another, Degas, who paints dancing-girls. There was a general outcry, exclamations of 'What motion in the air! how luminous! how it lives—lives—lives!' At last they reached my Vestal. And then—one glance,—no more,—and turning their heads away they said 'old-fashioned' and went their way."

Monsieur Sylvain paused, panting for breath. Jack, who, in spite of the unkind stings with which the old man had tortured him, now sincerely pitied him, murmured something like, "If people should take to heart what every donkey said——"

"What every donkey said!" flamed Sylvain. "Just hear the rest. I sat there a long time in the same place among the orange- and violet-hued daubs. Everybody made the same remark about my Vestal: 'Old-fashioned!—old-fashioned!' and passed on. Only one old gentleman with a short-handled gold lorgnon remained standing somewhat longer before it. 'Sylvain,' he murmured;



‘I remember the name; he was quite the fashion thirty years ago, but no one ever mentions him now.’ Monsieur Sylvain’s head drooped on his breast. Jack wanted to say something; tried to find some way to comfort him. But the artist interrupted his first words.

“That’s nothing!” he cried; “I could rise above other people’s holding me in light esteem; but do you know, a very singular phenomenon happened. While sitting more or less disheartened on the red sofa I shut my eyes to rest, and when I suddenly opened them they fell upon a picture by—— Ah, what does it matter?—Claude Monet, I believe! I started; a curious feeling took possession of me; the scales fell from my eyes. Ay, there was light, warmth, and movement; it lived—and my Angiolina was dead, my whole art was dead, and—I—I have stupidly forgotten to die. And to-day—to-day I have felt as if I had gone mad. I have gone from one of my pictures to another trying to persuade myself that I am right and the others wrong, but I cannot! Persuade me out of my fancies; prove that I am an artist!”

A cold shudder ran down Jack’s back; he remembered a day in his childhood when his first religious doubts assailed him, and in his agony of soul, stamping on the ground, he had cried out to an older friend on whom he was accustomed to cast all his metaphysical anxieties, “But prove to me that the soul is immortal!” His friend’s reply came back to his mind, “Such things cannot be proved; it is a matter of feeling.” And since this



was the most convenient commonplace he had at hand, Jack produced it.

Sylvain gazed angrily at him; he had expected something consoling.

“Go!” he cried, wrathfully; “go, if you have nothing more sensible to say!”

But when Jack, somewhat bewildered and with the paralyzing consciousness that he had come to the end of his resources, was taking his hat to leave the studio, Sylvain grasped his arm, exclaiming, “Stay,—you see that I am almost wild! Stay,—you will do a good deed! I really don’t know whether my head is on my shoulders to-day. Don’t leave me alone!”

Jack remained, but he began almost to fear the old artist, who had squandered his life and profaned his talent.

Meanwhile, Sylvain was still limping restlessly to and fro. “There is a circumstance,” he murmured, “a circumstance which—which makes the situation worse. There is a great auction going on to-day in the Hôtel Drouot,—a sale of pictures in which all the distinguished artists of France are represented. One of my paintings is among them,—a Salome. Of course I am anxious to learn what price it will bring. Vandenesse paid me thirty thousand francs for the picture ten years ago; yesterday I should have hoped it would sell for more than fifty thousand. To-day”—he stretched out his hands helplessly—“I no longer know——” After a pause he began again: “It is always an anxious time for artists; the price which the pict-



ure brings is published the next day in all the papers."

He turned his head as if to listen. "No, nobody. Strange. I should have thought the auction must be over." He dropped heavily into a chair.

"Shall I go over to the Hôtel Drouot?" asked Jack, good-naturedly.

"Oh, no, no," replied Sylvain; "it isn't necessary. Rambert is there. He promised to bring me news. It is foolish to be excited over such a matter. Yesterday I should have known what to expect. To-day——"

He wiped the big drops of perspiration from his brow with the back of his hand.

A leaden silence followed. The rattle of the horse-cars outside was unpleasantly loud in the stillness of the studio.

Sylvain drew out his watch. "I don't understand," he murmured; "something must have happened."

Jack seized his hat. "I'll see how things are, master," he cried; "I'll be back again in twenty minutes."

Just at that moment footsteps were heard on the stairs. "At last!" cried Sylvain. He went to the door, tore it open, and started back with a feeling of unpleasant surprise. Instead of the friend whom he expected to see a messenger entered.

"Monsieur Sylvain?" he asked, touching his cap.

"I am Monsieur Sylvain," replied the artist.

The man handed him a note. The hand which



Sylvain extended for the little white envelope fell by his side. He had recognized the journalist's writing; he knew that the latter would have come in person if he had had any pleasant tidings to communicate. Not until after the messenger had left the room did he resolve to open the note, and then, turning deadly pale, he staggered back, clinging to a chair for support.

At the first moment he was evidently disposed to withhold the mortifying contents of the missive. Then, with a quick gesture, he flung it to Jack. The latter read :

“Salome was withdrawn from the sale because no one would pay the price at which it was put up.

“Laugh at the want of taste displayed by the public, dear master, and leave it to your friends to be indignant.

“The affair is simply unprecedented,—unprecedented!

“RAMBERT.”

“Unprecedented!” cried Jack, furiously. His eyes had grown dim and he scarcely knew what he was saying.

“Unprecedented! unprecedented!” echoed Sylvain, grinding his teeth. “Rambert is right. I can only laugh at it; laugh.” He essayed to do so.

The laugh sounded terrible. He broke off abruptly. “Why am I laughing? At whom? The public or myself? Myself!” he murmured; “ay, myself, for the public—great heaven!—the public is right!”



An inexpressible emotion overwhelmed Jack. "Why, master, you ought not to take the matter so much to heart; surely not when a man can do work like yours."

Sylvain raised his head. "What do I do?" he exclaimed, sharply. "Look around you and tell me honestly whether you can praise any one of my pictures from your heart."

Jack sought with the utmost earnestness to find some sources of comfort for the old artist on the walls of the studio and the easels standing about. Suddenly his eyes sparkled with honest enthusiasm.

"Not one of your contemporaries has ever painted anything finer than yonder study!" he cried.

Monsieur Sylvain raised his head. "Which one do you mean?" he asked, slowly.

"Yonder lad riding a horse to water. It is as beautiful as anything by Gericault."

Jack paused; he perceived that he had committed a blunder. The fear stole into his mind that he had praised something which Sylvain's brush had never touched.

"Do you know when I painted it?" asked the latter, slowly.

Jack shook his head.

"Forty years ago, at the time when, with an empty stomach and nothing in my pockets, I was tramping from one art-dealer to another to sell my pictures. It was then that I made this study. I know it is beautiful, but why need you cast it in my teeth now? especially to-day,—to-day! Zounds,



Ferrars! you are the greatest dolt in Europe. You always thrust your finger into the wound." Monsieur Sylvain grasped a maul-stick with both hands as he spoke and broke it across his knee.

Jack was about to speak, but Sylvain imperiously interrupted. "You are right, perfectly right!" he cried. "The study is good, very good, the work of an artist; and these things standing about on my easels are trash. I know it to-day,—trash, the work of an artisan; nay, not even an artisan, but a clown, who for five-and-thirty years has turned somersaults for the edification of the public, and on whom, as a reward for his busy toil to please everybody, the public has turned the cold shoulder."

"But, dear master," said Jack, despondently, "you undervalue your own work and overestimate public opinion. The public is known to admire mediocrity."

"Oh, yes, with bunglers who are mediocre to their finger-tips the public is not only patient, but feels attracted to them. But when a really gifted artist begins to make concessions to the crude taste of the multitude, the public instantly withdraws first esteem and then favor. It is the same thing as when an honest man makes attempts at bribery,—baseness succeeds only with the base."

Exhausted and breathless, Sylvain planted himself before his Bulgarian Massacre. "But I will yet show people what I am capable of accomplishing!" he exclaimed, after a pause. "It is horrible when an old fellow like me is seized by the



longing to distinguish himself, to accomplish something magnificent, something grand,—nay, I must, though it should be my death! Only once,—show what I can accomplish!”

His breath failed. He passed his hand across his brow, then sank into a chair.

“Folly!” he groaned; “it is over,—it is over. I know it is all over!”

He buried his face in his hands and sobbed aloud.



## IV.

JACK had an appointment to breakfast with his aunt the next morning.

It was a hot day, and all Paris was reeking with the odor of scorched asphalt, dust, and roses, which floated even into the dull rooms of the Winters through the open windows.

Mrs. Winter was discussing with Jack the best watering-place to choose for herself and Mary during the warmest summer months. Jack absently suggested all sorts of plans, which were impossible to carry out, and Mrs. Winter patted him smilingly on the shoulder. Then she remarked anxiously about his haggard looks, shaking her head and raising her forefinger warningly as she asked whether he had not been rather too wild of late. He made the answer usually given by a young man to an old lady in such cases, kissed her hand, and said that his haggard appearance must be due to the frightful appetite which was consuming him.

They were only waiting for Mary's arrival ere they went to the table, but she did not appear.

Jack was beginning to jest about her profound interest in her work. True, she was now engaged upon an inspiring subject,—an old boot stand-



ing beside a stable lantern. It was not so easy a matter to tear herself away from so enthralling an object.

Just at that moment the door opened,—Mary entered. The expression of her face instantly revealed that something unusual had happened.

“How late you are!” cried her mother. “And—and—why, what is it?”

“Nothing; you need not be startled; only, Monsieur Sylvain has had a stroke of paralysis!”

“Dead?” asked Mrs. Winter. She had turned deadly pale, and was leaning trembling on the back of a chair.

“No; he is still living, but the case is hopeless,” replied Mary. “I waited for the doctor’s opinion; that’s why I am so late.”

The folding-doors of the dining-room opened and the servant announced, “Madame, breakfast is served.”

But Mrs. Winter did not move. She was sitting bolt upright in her arm-chair, restlessly smoothing with her somewhat stumpy hands the folds of her black silk dress. At last she raised her head. “How did it happen? Was any one present?” she asked, hoarsely.

“No, no one,” said Mary, quietly. “This morning he was found gasping and helpless, lying on the floor in his studio. They say he has led too gay a life of late. He is a very dissipated man,—repulsive, isn’t it? It is always disgusting!” Mary belonged to that class of Englishwomen who think that men should be judged by the same rule



of morality as women. "Immorality is always repulsive," she went on, "but, of course, it is doubly so in an old man. It is said that he attended a very gay entertainment last evening given by the actress Leah Richard. Just think of it, to visit her!"

Jack drummed with his forefinger upon his lips; the thought involuntarily darted through his mind of what Mary would say if she knew that he had attended the same entertainment. Meanwhile she went on:

"He came home early in the morning. Instead of going to his residence he must have entered his studio at once. Apparently, in a fit of delirium, he set to work to retouch many of his pictures, for they were found daubed with streaks of fresh violet, pink, and yellow paint. It is said that he was lying on the ground with the palette in his hand and a bleeding wound in his forehead. One side was completely paralyzed."

Mrs. Winter had turned slowly in her chair so that her back was towards her daughter. She used her handkerchief several times.

"Is there no hope?" asked Jack, anxiously.

"The doctor says that there is none. He may drag along in this condition for a time, but apparently there is nothing better to desire than a speedy end. It is terrible! I was completely overcome at first," Mary protested. "Well, I had no special interest in him! Let us go in to breakfast; I am very hungry."

But Mrs. Winter, still with her back turned to



her daughter and Jack, rose, and, with drooping head and short, heavy steps, approached the door opposite to the one leading into the dining-room.

“What is the matter, mamma?” asked Mary, sincerely anxious.

“I don’t feel very well, children; please breakfast without me. Perhaps I will come—in a little while.” With these words she disappeared.

Four days after the old-fashioned artist was lowered into his grave in a side avenue of the great gloomy cemetery of Montmartre, which, being within the boundaries of Paris, is constantly surrounded by the din of the city.

Mrs. Winter also accompanied him to his last resting-place. She was lost in the numbers of the outwardly imposing funeral procession, but she was the only person who sincerely mourned the dead man,—mourned for what he had permitted himself to waste more than for his life.

The others were present mainly because a rumor had spread abroad that Alexandre Dumas would deliver a funeral oration at the artist’s grave.

Alexandre Dumas did not deliver an oration, and the crowd dispersed much disappointed. Jack, who had escorted his aunt to the funeral, returned home with her. She sat beside him with a pale face and tearful eyes. For a long time she remained perfectly silent. At last, just before she reached home, she raised her head, saying, “I suppose you wonder that this should affect me so much, Jack, after so many years, and when I have



seen what he became. What can you expect?" She sighed; then added, with deep, resigned melancholy, "There are illusions which remain sacred even after they have merged into disappointment."

Soon after the carriage stopped. Jack was going to accompany the old lady up-stairs; she checked him. "Leave me alone a little while to-day," she begged, then, pressing his hand, turned away.

Jack, agitated and thoughtful, gazed after her.

"There are illusions which remain sacred even after they have merged into disappointment," he murmured. He thought the sentiment a beautiful one. In returning to his studio he took a round-about way in order to pass the house where Angiolina had lived.

A yellow placard was in the show-window, between a blue flannel dressing-sack and a mourning bonnet (price twelve francs). Curiosity assailed him; suppose it was her little room which stood empty. Three times he turned away, the fourth he entered the shop and asked about the room she had to rent. The woman blinked oddly at him,—why should an aristocratic-looking gentleman inquire concerning such modest quarters? Did he want them for secret interviews?

"I think the room might suit Monsieur perfectly," she said, boldly. "The door opens into the entry; Monsieur will be perfectly free to come and go."

The blood crimsoned Jack's cheeks, his ears



were burning. Had Angiolina considered it an advantage to have the door open into the entry?

"Was it the room which the—h'm!—the Italian model occupied?" he asked.

"Does Monsieur know anything about her?"

The woman's eyes twinkled cunningly, not without a certain careless good nature.

"Yes," replied Jack; then, even now avoiding the possibility of placing Angiolina in a false light, he hurriedly strove to protect her from any unjust suspicion by adding, "I went up there once. I am an artist."

"Ah!"

"What is the rent?"

The woman scanned him from head to foot, evidently to make a hurried estimate how far she might venture to overcharge him.

"Very low. I'll make it cheap to Monsieur; we always rent cheaper to gentlemen than to ladies. Thirty francs a month in advance."

Jack flung the thirty francs on the counter and asked for the key. Then he climbed the stairs.

A strange feeling stole over him as he crossed the threshold of the miserable little room. He had visited it only twice, remained in it scarcely fifteen minutes, yet he felt as though he were returning to a familiar apartment.

He recognized the little vases and *bric-à-brac* which had belonged to her.

The vases were empty,—dust lay on everything. The curtains were drawn back from the narrow iron bedstead, which had been stripped of bed-



clothes. The chamber gave one the impression that some one had recently died there.

Beside the old piano stood the chair in which she had sat the day that he surprised her,—just before his illusions were destroyed. Her presence had ennobled the tiny room; but without her how pitiable everything looked!

Deep emotion overwhelmed him at the sight of this desolate penury. He recalled Angiolina's peerless beauty; he said to himself that she need only have stretched out her finger, and the noblest, richest, most distinguished men in Paris would have vied with each other to lay their princely wealth at her feet. She might have occupied a palace.

Instead, she lived in a wretched hired room, and wore calico gowns which cost ten cents a yard.

She had repelled the advances of the most distinguished artists in Paris, and yet held out her arms to him, Jack. He remembered her words: "So long as the one man whom I love thinks well of me, everything else is a matter of indifference,—the opinion of men and the judgment of God."

An intense compassion seized upon him. The recollection of his incredible brutality to her weighed heavily upon his soul. He locked the door, flung himself on the floor beside the little iron bed, which was as narrow and hard as a coffin, and sobbed bitterly.

The next morning he sought Luca Canini, and asked where Angiolina lived. Luca did not know; he had made her acquaintance in Paris. He in-



quired here and there, of this person and that,—no one knew anything about her.

She had vanished, utterly vanished.

We are again in London, as in the beginning of this story, and again, as in the beginning of our story, the two Ferrars are together. Only, it is true,—only between that time and now there is a very wide difference.

Instead of the refined comfort which then surrounded Jack, his environments now revealed extreme poverty,—the sleeping-room of a second- or third-rate lodging-house, a room with gloomy mahogany furniture, a threadbare carpet which seemed to have been pieced together from the remnants of frayed stair-carpeting, a bed which resembled a hearse accidentally draped with red hangings instead of black ones, and a hideous blue and yellow wall-paper. This paper alone was enough to give any one the blues. The mantelpiece was adorned with sky-blue vases and numerous pink shells. Coarse white crocheted tidies hung on almost all the pieces of furniture.

Jack himself had changed almost more than his surroundings. His clothes hung loosely on his emaciated limbs; they looked dusty, as if the young man no longer cared for his personal appearance. His hair was badly cut, and the sunny, bright expression of his face had wholly disappeared. Two deep lines appeared at the corners of his mouth, and two dark wrinkles ran from the corners of his eyes to his cheek-bones.



While Sir Bryan, sitting in a chair covered with red plush, was reading him a lecture, Jack, with his thin hands under the skirts of his coat, was pacing restlessly to and fro.

“So, to sum it up in a single word,” Sir Bryan said, closing his lecture, “you are ruined, utterly ruined!”

It was little more than a year since Sir Bryan had delivered a similar lecture to his brother, closing it with the same annihilating word. At that time Jack had thrust his hands into the pockets of his coat, and with his blue eyes gazing idly into vacancy, murmured, “Ruined, ruined,” and then laughed. The word had been meaningless to him.

Now he understood it. Surrounded by this dull brown mahogany and shabby plush, before the hearse-like bed and the soiled paper from whose interlaced blue and yellow pattern frightful faces grinned, he understood the word “Ruined!”

He muttered again and again between his teeth, “Ruined, ruined, ruined,—the devil! Ruined!”

Taking a large glass of brandy and soda from a small table, he emptied it at a single draught. “Confound it!” he murmured, stamping on the floor.

Sir Bryan watched him disapprovingly.

“My dear fellow, I would advise you, instead of using expressions which are not worthy of an English gentleman,”—Sir Bryan clasped his hands over the silver knob of his tightly-rolled umbrella,—“I would advise you rather to form a clear idea



of the situation, and make some definite plan for the future."

"Well, according to what you have told me, my best plan for the future would be to find a nail strong enough to hang myself from it!" cried Jack, bitterly, mixing a second glass of brandy and soda.

"Let us have no useless forms of speech," exclaimed Sir Bryan, angrily. "Suicide, like duelling, belongs to a former age. In the early part of the century it happened sometimes that people who belonged to the first families—Lord Castlereagh, for instance—killed themselves; now it is only members of the lower classes who seek this mode of escape from their difficulties."

"Yes, you are right; it is no longer good form to hang one's self," replied Jack, sharply, and then added, still more sharply, "You must credit the commonplace idea to my blood,—these are the drawbacks of our extraction."

"Let our extraction rest!" replied Sir Bryan, angrily. "What do you know of our extraction?"

"Not very much, it is true," replied Jack, "since I have no idea who our great-grandfather was."

"Our great-grandfather was the son born in poverty of a descendant of the Ferrars who stabbed George Villiers."

"Indeed! H'm! So the enterprising student of heraldry who devised your genealogical tree could find nothing more noble?" asked Jack. "Do we descend from an assassin, Bryan? Then,



instead of seeking a great-grandfather, I would rather stand by my old grandfather, who, at least, was an honest man."

"Dear me," replied Sir Bryan, indignantly, "the assassin belonged to a very good family."

Jack laughed,—there was a touch of his former gayety in the sound, but only for a moment, then it grew hard and stern. "H'm! How times change!" he said, mockingly. "To-day a poor simpleton like myself is not even permitted to commit suicide lest it should tarnish the Ferrars respectability, and in the reign of King Charles assassination does not appear to have injured aristocracy."

This forced and by no means brilliant witticism was, of course, little calculated to improve Sir Bryan's temper. He measured his brother with an annihilating glance. "Cease this foolish jesting," he said, reprovingly; "that is an old-fashioned view; in these times pedigree—except, perhaps, for a horse—is not all. Connections are the chief point to be considered."

Sir Bryan passed his hand complacently over his smoothly shaven upper lip. Then he drew his watch out of his pocket. "Six o'clock. I can wait no longer. I have made your situation perfectly clear to you; the rest is your own affair. Try to keep up your courage. Good-by!" He turned to go.

Jack looked after him. At first he stood as if he were rooted to the earth, perfectly motionless, with clinched hands and frowning brow. The



words he must utter would not cross his lips. At last, when Sir Bryan had already placed his hand upon the knob of the door, Jack followed, crossing the little room in three strides, and laying his hand on his arm, exclaimed, hoarsely, "Bryan!"

The baronet looked up.

Jack knew that his fate probably depended upon putting his brother into a good humor. He strove to find some winning words; but Jack was Jack. When the baronet warned him by a somewhat impatient "Well?" to be more explicit, he could find nothing better to say than, "Bryan! Is it good form to leave one's nearest relatives to starve?"

The slowest person will sometimes be ready at repartee if sufficiently irritated. Sir Bryan raised his dull gray eyes to the face of the younger brother, who towered a head above him, and said, calmly, "I have never given the subject any thought whatever. At any rate, it is good form not to provoke those whose good offices we desire."

Jack's head drooped; his brother was right. For a time both were silent, the baronet still with his hand on the door-knob, Jack a few steps distant with his eyes fixed upon the floor.

Sir Bryan was the first to renew the conversation. He had the triumphant expression of a man who has made a rebellious horse feel his power by a sharp stroke of the whip, and has not been thrown by the animal.

"Well, no offence, Jack," he said. "I know that it must be difficult for a man of your character



and in your position to make a request. But speak out. If I can fulfil your wish without wronging my own family,—justice before generosity, justice before generosity,—I am ready, Jack, I am ready!”

He spoke almost cordially. Jack, always prone to emotion, a tendency which during his extreme depression had greatly increased, held out his hand, murmuring, “You are a good fellow; at heart you are really a good fellow, and I was beastly to you and am sorry.”

“Only let us have no sentimentality,” said Sir Bryan. “Tell me instead what you want; I haven’t much time, very little time.”

“Bryan, according to what you say I can no longer depend upon any income.”

Sir Bryan raised his eyebrows. “Income? Your creditors will have great difficulty in settling their claims with the remnant of your property; I doubt if it will be possible to satisfy them. Part must go empty-handed.”

Jack turned deadly pale. “And—Bryan, would you permit that,—would you suffer me to bear the stigma of dishonor? Advance what I need to satisfy my creditors. I will repay you honestly, penny for penny.”

“Indeed; and how?” asked the baronet, an almost humorous smile playing around his usually grave lips.

Jack hesitated a moment, then he drew a long breath and, raising his drooping head, said, “I’ll make you a proposal. I am no longer the man I



was a year and a half ago. At that time I laughed at the idea of living on three hundred pounds a year; even with the best intentions I could not have accomplished it. Now it is different, I have associated with so many people who have less, and yet live respectably and usefully——” He paused.

The baronet’s face wore an anxious expression.

“Well?” he said to his brother.

“Well, you see, Bryan,”—he laid his hand on the other’s arm,—“apparently God has given me a talent which only requires earnest cultivation to secure me an independent and respected position in life. I beg you satisfy my creditors and give me for three years an income of one hundred and fifty pounds. If in the course of these three years I should not be able to discharge my obligations to you, I’ll promise that you shall never hear from me again.”

A leaden silence followed. Sir Bryan tapped restlessly on the floor with the end of his umbrella. At last he returned from the door into the room and said, “I won’t be hard on you, Jack. You are my brother, and I was once very proud of you; you were the show member of the family, the proof of the aristocracy of the race,—the assertion of the noble blood newly instilled by our mother. You are a capital fellow in your way, but you wholly lack the perseverance necessary to accomplish anything. You have the best intentions, which you never execute, and the noblest impulses, with which you merely work mischief. Now you propose to live in Paris on a hundred and fifty



pounds a year and, amid eccentric deprivations, study to be a great artist. And do you know, my dear fellow, how you would carry out this intention as soon as you had your first quarter's income in your hands? You would lend the first ten-pound note to some interesting friend who approached you with a sufficiently pathetic face; the second you would spend for some Japanese or other curio on account of its amazing cheapness, in the hope of making something by it; that is, you would invest in the lottery; in a lottery because, finally, it would seem utterly impossible to make both ends meet on such a trifle. No, Jack, I am sorry, but such an arrangement is out of the question. I will make another proposal. I cannot promise to satisfy your creditors, but I will agree to quiet them. For the rest,—I can do no more,—I'll place a thousand pounds at your disposal, on condition that you will leave Europe and seek your fortune in some other quarter of the globe."

Jack's head drooped very low; suddenly he raised it. "I understand," he exclaimed; "you want to get me out of the way because it would be just as unpleasant to you to have a brother near who endured the shabby life required by a small income as one who did not accommodate himself to it. One would impair the dignity of the Ferrars family as much as the other. Well, keep your thousand pounds and the assurance that your offer was a remarkably magnificent one for you, while I will retain the right of going to ruin where and as I choose. Do not waste any more of your pre-



cious time. Farewell!" He turned his back on his brother and, with something of his former defiant manner, went back into the room.

The baronet lingered at the door a moment. "You are vexed," he murmured, shrugging his shoulders. "With a person in your position it is no wonder. But I am a man of my word, I will not retract my offer; the thousand pounds will be at your disposal; perhaps you may change your mind."

"The devil!" muttered Jack, still with his back turned to his brother; then suddenly, with a hasty movement, he wheeled around, pointing towards the door.

Sir Bryan disappeared. He did not feel quite comfortable.

If the prosaic, ambitious man had a tender weakness for any human creature,—his respectable affection for his wife and children, an affection which was nothing more than expanded self-love and self-glorification, was a thing apart and free from tenderness as well as weakness,—if the baronet had an insufficiently founded, unreasonable, and warm feeling for any person living, it was for his brother Jack. He was really almost inclined to turn back and fulfil the young fellow's request. But reason told him that this would be folly; and, in truth, reason was right, if one could draw any inference concerning Jack's future from his past. And then—yes, there Jack had hit the nail on the head—it would have been almost as disagreeable to the baronet to have an economical brother who



sensibly submitted to the shabby existence his penury imposed, as an extravagant one who continued to play the *grand Seigneur* at Sir Bryan's expense.

The Ferrars family had not yet taken any firm root; it was a feeble little plant which needed fostering.

"Poor boy!" murmured the baronet. "Such a splendid fellow! But there's no helping him. He has brought it upon himself; it is all his own fault."

This reflection served to console the baronet.

Meanwhile, Jack had reached the same conclusion. Only, strangely enough, in his case the conviction brought no comfort, and merely added to the intensity of his discouragement. After the baronet's departure, he paced up and down his miserable room like a wild beast in its cage or a prisoner in his cell, trying to think. But all his pondering proved futile; it seemed as if his thoughts were confined within a space as narrow as his limbs. What was he to do? The close atmosphere oppressed his breathing. He had thrown both windows open, but no very invigorating air entered. "Strange!" he murmured. "If a man isn't a peasant, a little fresh air is a luxury as unattainable as fresh butter and a daily change of linen. I could bear everything in this hole better than the air, this shabby-tasting air! As if I still had a right to complain of anything,—I—I! I have only myself to blame for all,—all!"



He sank into one of the mahogany chairs and propped his elbows upon the little table where the brandy-bottle stood. Suddenly the refrain of the song which the peasant lads and lasses had sung on the banks of the Seine echoed in his soul: "Qu'as-tu fait, qu'as-tu fait de ta jeunesse!" He buried his face in his hands. He had lost all power to think.

Suddenly he felt a touch on his shoulder. He did not know to whom the hand belonged, but a pleasant sense of warmth stole over him from head to foot. He looked up; a lady was bending tenderly, anxiously over him,—his Aunt Jane.

"Have I found you at last, you silly boy, you foolish, abominable boy?" she cried. "Is this sensible behavior for a reasonable mortal, you spendthrift, you reckless, wicked, good-for-nothing, you—you poor fellow?" Every one of the former epithets she had, as it were, underscored by a little pat. As she uttered the last she stooped, stroked his cheek caressingly, and repeatedly kissed his light-brown hair. Jack kept his face hidden on her breast. "Yes, yes," she murmured, "hide your face and feel ashamed, thoroughly ashamed, and when you have done so, we will resolve to hold our heads high again and look the future boldly in the face."

"The future!" he muttered,—*"the future!"*

She answered with another little pat. "Yes, your future!" she cried, resolutely. "As if a man like you, a man with your talents, had any right



to despair merely because he has committed a few follies,—and mere commonplace follies into the bargain, for which you need feel no remorse. Well, what is the cause of all this misery?”

“I have wasted my youth, I have lost my property, I have killed all joy within me,” groaned Jack.

“What terrible words!” said the old lady, reprovingly. “You are simply ill, my poor boy! First of all we will nurse you back to health. Come and drive with me to Ivy Lodge. It is very dull at our house, but in your present condition it will do you good to be a little bored. After that we will see. Oh, Jack, Jack! young, talented, with nothing in your life for which you have reason to be ashamed,—a clear conscience and liberty,—oh, Jack! don’t sin against yourself; you have the future before you.”

The young man, as he listened to her earnest words, slowly raised his head. “You are right; we will see what can be done,” he said, gently, raising her hand to his lips. “Perhaps I may yet accomplish something.”

“Accomplish something! You will see how your strength grows with necessity. Cast all your spoiling behind you and—forward!”

“Forward!” Jack repeated.

“Where are your clothes? I’ll help you pack,” said Mrs. Winter.

“I haven’t unpacked anything,” answered Jack, glancing carelessly at a red valise which lay at the foot of the hearse-like bed.



"Then forward, for the present to Putney!" cried Mrs. Winter, humorously.

Jack often recalled the words "Forward, for the present to Putney!"

The aunt and nephew drove together past the monotonous chocolate-colored architecture along the road to Putney. Jack had not been over it since he had gone on that beautiful May-day to seek a bride. A shudder ran through his frame at the thought. He had suddenly turned back—whither?

He involuntarily glanced out of the cab in which he sat with his aunt. A yellowish-gray fog was sinking from the clouds, rising from the earth, and veiling everything in a cold, damp atmosphere, which oppressed the chest. Only a short time before it had seemed to Jack as if this chill, creeping fog were resting on his life, too, crushing it to the earth and extinguishing every joy. And now his aunt Jane's affection and sympathy had conjured into the mist a little islet of light and warmth. Ah, it was such delight to be cheered by this overflowing sympathy, to seek refuge in it from the gray oppressive national fog! He was placed under no obligations. He only wanted to rest a few days. He was so frightfully weary.

Rest, and then—yes, what then? He could pursue the train of thought no farther: he was weary.



## V.

Now he was in Putney. Days became weeks, yet he did not think of departure. He felt happy there, nay, it even seemed as if he had rarely been more at ease. The regular monotony of life in the quiet suburb exerted a beneficial influence upon his shattered nervous system. His former existence lay behind him like a fiercely burning fever, from which he rejoiced to be freed. "I have grown old, I have suddenly grown old," he said to himself, and then added that he was glad to be old, and in this he was sincere.

Everything in his new surroundings pleased him,—the Puritanical simplicity of the style of housekeeping, the healthful regularity, plainness, and lack of high seasoning in the fare, the fragrance of lavender, sharpened by a slight odor of camphor which pervaded the dwelling, nay, the very bareness of the furniture and the old-fashioned light tints of the wall-papers. There were moments when Jack actually loved the crude, in-artistic steel engravings in brown wooden frames, which covered a portion of these papers. He was like a man satiated with wine who eagerly drinks pure water. Everything which reminded him of the fever of life repelled him. A person who has



sought refuge from the world in a convent may have similar emotions.

Above his bed in the chamber, fairly shining with neatness, which he occupied in Ivy Lodge, hung an engraving which at first sight appeared somewhat comical to Jack and afterwards touched him : an Infant Jesus, attired in a long white night-robe, with a gigantic halo round his head, was kneeling at the feet of the Virgin Mary, who was teaching him to pray. It was so innocent, so simple ; every morning when he woke the Infant Jesus smiled at him, and in the evening the last thing he saw before extinguishing his light was the child at prayer. One day, half involuntarily, he clasped his own hands, and, almost ere he was aware of it, the simple, fervent words of the first prayer he had learned to falter when a child at his mother's knee fell from his lips.

His religious convictions, like those of most of the enlightened young men of our times, had reached a very hypothetical "Perhaps." During the first evenings of his stay at Mrs. Winter's he had remained merely from a sense of courtesy, when she assembled the servants, just before the hour of retiring, to read a verse from the Bible and repeat the Lord's Prayer.

Within a short time he had grown accustomed to listen for the words and repeat the prayer ; and then he enjoyed the little religious ceremony as a nervous invalid likes his sleeping potion.

On Sundays he accompanied his relatives to church. It was an unpretending little edifice



where an aged vicar conducted the services in a very dull, old-fashioned style.

He was not one of the modern clergymen who have read David Strauss and Robert Elsmere and are now striving to reconcile science and religion, which is much the same thing as harnessing an animal and a bird to the same pole. Jack had attended such experiments in the fashionable quarters of London. They had always seemed to him somewhat ludicrous; and he had sincerely marvelled at the enthusiasm with which the congregation—especially the feminine portion—listened to these masterpieces of intellectual oratory, in which chasms not to be bridged were eluded by insinuating sophisms.

No, the Rev. Arthur Lang accepted his religion in modest humility, as it had come down to him from his forefathers, simply and sincerely, which is the only way to prevent an intelligent church-goer from thinking of the wide variance that must ever exist between our faith and our ideas.

Jack now liked to go to church, and spent two hours every Sunday, with genuine pleasure, in the Winters' big old-fashioned family pew.

Did he pay much heed to the religious services?

He enjoyed the cold odor of lime of the white-washed walls, the subdued light which, falling athwart the tombstones and between the sombre arbor-vitæ trees in the cemetery which surrounded this old-fashioned house of God, stole through the small panes of its high, narrow windows.

The colors of the interior, consisting only of



white, gray, and brown, were grateful to his eyes, as the simple hymns, sung almost without accompaniment, fell soothingly on his ears. He was pleased, too, with the ardent, devout expression in the eyes of the worshippers, all gazing in the same direction,—the crucifix resting against the bare wall of the church. And gradually Jack's eyes followed the others; the magic of the great legend surrounded him. While he let the hymns, without heeding the meaning of their words, steal into his soul like a soothing caress, his thoughts wandered to the poor Jew of Nazareth who, when He could not save men, at least taught them to die with resignation.

He forgot that behind this resignation stood Hope with outspread wings. Hope was a disturbing element which, in his anxious haste to destroy the last vestige of the fever rising in his veins, he had pitilessly stricken from the narcotic programme of his life.

Day by day he narrowed his horizon, forced his thoughts into more and more restricted circles. He no longer even read the newspapers,—everything which recalled the present, with its ceaseless struggle to press forward, was distasteful.

In this stagnation he expected to find health. But what he mistook for health was merely an artificial torpor, which must be followed by a terrible reaction.

“Jack, what have you been doing all day long?”



It was Mrs. Winter who put the question to her nephew.

She was sitting beside the hearth in the same long, spacious, somewhat low room where Jack had met her on his first visit to Ivy Lodge.

The young man was standing on the threshold of the open door leading into the garden, gazing out.

"What have I been doing?" he repeated, in the inert manner which had recently become habitual. "What I have been doing for the last few weeks,—feeling comfortable!"

"Feeling comfortable,—feeling comfortable!" repeated the old lady, impatiently. "If you can feel comfortable under existing circumstances, it is evident that you are ill."

"Ill!" Jack shrugged his shoulders. "What put that idea into your head? I have seldom been so well."

"Well,—well!" cried Mrs. Winter, angrily. "When people are on the point of freezing, they say they feel comfortable. The last stages of numbness are always soothing; but, dear me, at your age people don't think of torpidity. Death is still far distant. Live!"

Jack shook himself. "Ah, let me alone, Aunt Jane! Life is so painful!" he replied.

"Sometimes it is, at others it is very good," rejoined the old lady; "we must put up with that."

"Exactly what I am trying to do," Jack asserted.

"What! by dozing, lounging, and brooding?"



This is the most thorough morphine treatment to which you are yielding! I have been watching you more and more closely day by day, and—understand you each day less.”

“You don’t understand how I can consent to live on so one day after another at your expense,” said Jack, slowly.

The old lady crimsoned with anger. “Come here!” she cried.

Jack turned from the open door and approached his aunt.

“Kneel down!” she commanded.

He did so, whereupon she dealt him several not very gentle slaps on both cheeks. “There,” she said, “that is for your nonsense. But the life you are now leading cannot fail to bring on softening of the brain. Once for all, my boy, never forget that you are dearer to me than anything else in the world, and so long as I have a crust of bread which is large enough to be divided into halves, I am ready to give you one of them.”

“You need not assure me of that; I knew it,” said Jack; “but what would you think of me if I were equally ready to accept this half?”

The old lady remained silent.

Dusk was beginning to approach; the days are short in October. Jack placed another log of wood on the fire and, shivering, spread his hands over the blaze.

“Have you already formed any plan for your future?” asked the aunt.

“My future?—no! I cannot yet!” murmured



Jack, shaking his head. "I know that it must be done, but—let me alone a little while longer; it is still too distasteful to busy myself with the problem of my existence."

"Jack, you foolish fellow, I can't listen to this!" Mrs. Winter exclaimed, indignantly. "If at least you would trust me! It is impossible that the loss of your little pittance could have placed you in this condition."

"Oh, no!"—Jack shook his head—"but—life is loathsome to me.

"It is loathsome because you have destroyed your pleasure in it. Why have you done so? Why have you, during all these last months, squandered your health, your money, and your time, all with a face as mournful as that of a grave-digger at a state funeral, without deriving a single hour's enjoyment from it all?"

"Oh, Aunt Jane, don't question me! Questions are useless, and answers would be equally so."

"Yet I shall continue to ask," she replied.

"How you torture me!" he exclaimed, almost fiercely. "But if you must know all: during the months of dissipation of which you speak I killed a foe,—my youth, and am now in the act of burying it. Day by day a little deeper, a little deeper still,—one more spadeful of earth,—not enough yet,—a stone, a flat, heavy stone, that it may not stir any more,—never any more! And when my task is done, when the fever is wholly spent, then—why, then I will once more, in God's name, patiently take up the burden of my life!"



"That is, you want to make yourself artificially old," said Mrs. Winter.

"Yes, aunt, I do!" returned Jack, grinding his teeth. "If you knew how I envy your white hair and quiet content."

"You—envy me?" The old lady gazed mournfully at the handsome, vigorous young man. "You—envy me? Well, let that pass; the content of age is more sorrowful than the despair of youth,—and do you know why? I will tell you. Because in youth, no matter how disheartened we may be for the moment, heaven is before us; while in age, no matter whether we have enjoyed it or not, it lies behind us."

"Indeed!" cried Jack, bitterly. "I should like to know in what form."

"Heaven on earth is always a narrow paradise," said the old lady, "yet whatever joys it can offer here below should be yours. You are talented, you can find pleasure in your work, perhaps some day be proud of your career, and then you can think of establishing a home. You will probably find somewhere in the world a girl endowed by nature as generously as yourself, who is well suited for your life companion, and when you meet her it will not be difficult to secure her. There are no two things in the whole universe fairer than love and labor,—labor for those whom we love, forgetfulness of self for the sake of some one dearest to us,—that is heaven on earth! True, it never fell to my lot; it lies untasted far, far behind me, yet I can imagine how fair it must be."



“Ah, aunt, it seems fair to you simply *because* you never tasted it,” replied Jack, very bitterly, “because your illusions were not shattered on the cliffs of reality. But, believe me, it is not fair,—it is a mere delusion of Satan. Its avant-courier is the delirium of fever; after we have enjoyed it, we endure horror and loathing. This is the so-called heaven upon earth; this is love! Passion is a siren which, while wallowing in the mire, grasps at the stars. I want no more of either!”

Poor Mrs. Winter’s eyes, profoundly innocent with all their shrewdness, gazed long and earnestly at him with an intensely perplexed expression. She did not understand him; her wisdom was exhausted; she could only murmur, “You are ill! you are ill!”

“I *was* ill,” Jack answered, “very ill, but I am improving every day. Who tells you that I am not thinking of establishing a home?” he added, in a low tone. “I often think of it. But one thing I will say: I shall not choose for a companion one of your richly-gifted, fascinating girls! No, my wife must be clever, quiet, sincere, and somewhat practical; pretty, but not beautiful; sensible, but not intellectual; a trifle domestic. I want to have a soothing element near me; can you comprehend that, aunt?”

Mrs. Winter nodded. “I understand what you wish; understand it perfectly,—a smooth, heavy tombstone on the grave of your youth.”

“Why, yes,” Jack answered, almost defiantly.

“Jack! Jack! Don’t be foolish!” cried the old



lady, warningly. "Youth cannot be killed thus in a day. It will not die; do you hear? Bury it as deep as you please, and lay the heaviest tombstone on it, a sunbeam will yet come to wake it to life; and then it will rise from the grave, hurling the stone aside; it will be greedy, pitiless, and work infinite woe, misusing its unchained powers,—the powers that might have bestowed so much happiness."

Jack made no reply. The twilight gathered more and more closely around the pair. Silence reigned. Nothing was heard save the crackling of the fire, and from without a low, shuddering, mournful sound floated through the open door, a sound blended with a sweet odor,—the scent of autumnal decay.

Jack had risen and returned to his post at the door.

Mrs. Winter followed him. The soft dusk rested on the garden like a violet veil, striped here and there with the silver-gray hue of the evening mist. It crept over the ground, softly ascended the bushes, and effaced with its shimmering folds the outlines of the ancient ash-trees.

The air was warm and damp; not the faintest breeze was stirring, no bird-notes were heard, only ever and anon a leaf rustled wearily to the earth with a sound like a faint sigh. A sacred awe pervaded everything,—the awe of nature's death.

Denser and denser grew the twilight, deeper the veil of mist.

"How beautiful the autumn is!" Jack murmured. "I hate the spring."



From an adjoining room rose the choral of Bach's Matthew-Passion: "When I must Die."

It was Mary; she played stiffly, awkwardly, but simply and correctly.

Jack turned his head. It seemed as if drops of ice-cold water were falling on his sore heart.

"The most beautiful music in the world!" he said.

Mrs. Winter shook her head sorrowfully and repeated, "You are ill, Jack, you are ill!"

He was indeed ill. A few days removed all doubt of it.

The day after this conversation Mrs. Winter again had an earnest talk with her nephew, offering him at its close what Jack had vainly asked his brother,—the allowance of an income, that he might devote himself for the next three years, with no anxiety concerning means of living, to the study of his art in Paris. Of course she was ready to make this income larger than Jack had expected from Sir Bryan.

"I can easily spare four hundred pounds a year," she said; "that is what you need at present to live healthfully and suitably. Only I must mention one thing, my dear boy. You can have the use of my entire income during my life. If necessary, I will joyfully give you my last shilling, but I can leave you nothing. I married my husband without having any marriage settlement. Consequently, according to the English law, my property became his. He bequeathed it to his two daughters, set-



ting upon me only a life income, though a generous one."

It was agreed that Jack should go to Paris early in January. Meanwhile, he promised to set to work while at Ivy Lodge.

On the very next tolerably warm November morning he did drag his easel into the garden, and began to reproduce on a large canvas the poetic autumnal decay. The work interested him. His brush willingly obeyed his perceptions. He found very appropriate tones of color to represent the mood of nature. Suddenly he felt as if a hard, heavy hand had seized his head. He paid no heed and worked on. But the hand grew heavier and heavier, the pressure more and more painful. The pang extended the whole length of his back, and was even felt in his wrists. The brush fell from his grasp. "How clumsy!" he murmured, stooping to pick it up. He had the utmost difficulty in standing erect again. Just at that moment a small, cool, somewhat hard hand touched his shoulder.

"Oh, how superb, how wonderful! What richness of color!" cried Mary Winter. The words flattered Jack. Besides, they were really apt, though it was merely by accident, for Mary had no true appreciation of art. She liked everything Jack painted. She would have thought his study superb, wonderful, and rich in color had he represented the autumnal atmosphere by green and blue squares.

"Do you really like it?" he asked, forgetting his aching limbs a moment.



"Magnificent!" cried Mary, enthusiastically. "You will be the greatest landscape-painter of your time! But come in now, lunch is ready."

Jack sat down at the table in a somewhat exalted mood. But no sooner had he eaten his eggs (lunch at Ivy Lodge always began with eggs) than he again felt the pain which had so unpleasantly surprised him in the garden, only it was far more violent and accompanied with unbearable discomfort.

"Pray excuse me. I cannot sit through the meal. I must lie down a moment," he said to the two ladies.

Wearily, scarcely knowing how he accomplished it, he crept up the stairs. When Mrs. Winter came to look after him he was lying on the bed with his teeth chattering and his face turned towards the wall.

*La grippe*, the spiteful influenza which paralyzes mind and body, had attacked him.

The disease had already lost the reputation for harmlessness with which it was at first credited, and the physicians did not conceal from Mrs. Winter that they considered Jack's situation critical. A severe attack of inflammation of the lungs still further complicated the state of affairs.

For the space of a fortnight Jack was too miserable to feel any further interest either in life or in death. On the sixteenth day after his illness he began for the first time to take some notice of what was passing around him.



Mrs. Winter was sitting by his bedside in a large arm-chair. He dimly saw the outline of her figure by the faint light of an oil-lamp covered with a green shade. He tried to raise himself on one elbow, but it cost him a great effort; his whole body seemed to have been changed into lead.

"Aunt," he asked, carelessly, "am I going to die?"

"Heaven forbid, my dear boy; you are on the most favorable path to recovery," she answered, earnestly.

"H'm!" murmured Jack, peevishly, like a weary man who has anticipated a quiet sleep and is informed that he must rise in half an hour. The prospect of living longer did not afford him the slightest pleasure.

"I had really been rejoicing that my days were coming to an end," he said.

"Hush," replied his aunt, reprovingly; "we know that it is the *grippe*. Total destruction of the desire to live is one of the symptoms of the disease."

"Ah, then the *grippe* is evidently one of the diseases which make people sensible," remarked Jack.

"You goose!"

"Why a goose? Is there anything in the world more foolish than the desire to live,—that which Châteaubriand characterizes as '*la manie d'être*?' A something which compels us to continue an occupation that is repugnant."

"So you are beginning to philosophize; I am glad," replied the old lady, approaching Jack's



bed and smoothing his bolster. "The doctor thought that you would recover your senses to-day; he prepared me for having you turn from life with indignation; if affairs went very well, you would begin to philosophize. 'If the horror continues,' the physician said to me, 'give your patient a glass of brandy; if he arrives at philosophizing, insist upon his having a plate of soup.' I'm going to get you the soup."

Before leaving the room Mrs. Winter removed the green shade from the lamp. A pleasant twilight pervaded the apartment. Jack now saw distinctly the little figure of the Infant Jesus, with the gigantic halo, praying above his bed.

The wind was raving outside of the house and the half-frozen winter rain beat against the panes. The comfort of warmth and security surrounded Jack. If only he need not stir again, but drowse on till death came,—he asked nothing more.

Just then the door opened and Mrs. Winter entered. Behind her came Mary, bringing with her own hands to his bedside the tray on which stood the soup.

Three days later he had left his chamber, and shortly after he was permitted to walk out half an hour in the noonday sun. It might now have been expected that his vigorous young organism would speedily recuperate. But no. The weakness remained unchanged day after day; trivial relapses occurred, giddiness, pains in the limbs, buzzing in the ears. He was no longer confined to the bed,



but he dropped as it were from one chair into another, and for several weeks after leaving his room hobbled about the house leaning on a cane. The numbing of the vitality, the total lack of enjoyment of life, increased rather than diminished. His present condition bore no comparison to the comfortable, dreamy melancholy with which he had dragged himself through existence before the final outbreak of illness. He now felt to his very finger-tips such heavy, utter despondency, that it was unspeakably irksome even to stir under the burden. He could not resolve to commence the most trivial occupation. His discomfort assumed the most varied forms: dread,—he knew not of what, of the future, of every approaching day,—pangs of conscience, and, above all, the conviction that his talent had been a mere invention of his friends, that he would be condemned to be supported by his relatives all his life. He could have wept like a little child at the thought, and he often did turn his face to the wall and actually shed tears. Then he was ashamed of himself. He spent his whole time in being ashamed of something or dreading something. If he said anything concerning his state of mind, people answered quietly that that was perfectly natural; it was the consequence of the *grippe*.

His personal appearance had changed: his features had lost their clear-cut outlines, his face was bloated and pale, even his limbs were larger; his whole figure had grown more clumsy.

During this time Mary's treatment of him was



admirable. The vivacious, somewhat restless old lady lectured him too much, labored too earnestly and too soon to excite him,—rouse him from his apathy. Mary left him to his moods, paid no heed to his boundless and sometimes offensive irritability, waited upon him as if he were a child, and guessed his wishes—the few he still had—before they were uttered.

She, who could not understand his nature so long as he was strong and well, comprehended him now that he was weak and miserable better than her step-mother. He began to miss her if she was away long. He called her a dozen times a day, but when she came he had nothing to tell her. Yet her presence did him good, soothed him. He often asked her to play something; always the same earnest, mysterious chorals or solemn, melancholy dance measures by Bach. She played clumsily, without any attempt at expression, on the old piano, which on Jack's account had been moved from the drawing-room to the sitting-room, and this calm, ghostly music pleased him. He could not endure any other.

Another week passed. He had now adopted the habit of having Mary read aloud to him. The selection of the books he left to her. He was still unable to follow a solid history or philosophical essay, so she tried novels. At first he smiled at the milk-and-water stories, which seemed to him almost ludicrous in the simplicity of their psychological groundwork, whence the treatment of any deep problem was excluded. Soon this wishy-



washy diet wearied him. Then Mary took up older works, which, though possessing much philosophical value, had, so to speak, only a bowing acquaintance with love, keeping it at a respectful distance. She read the immortal essays of Charles Lamb, the sweetest cradle-songs ever sung by one tortured human soul to other suffering spirits; lastly, the ever-venerable, ever-young "Vicar of Wakefield."

While reading the story of the life of this sorely-tried philosopher Mary once flushed crimson, which was very becoming to her, and then something strange happened. Jack laughed, then took her cool, slender hand in his and kissed it.

It was near the end of January. The snow in the little garden of Ivy Lodge looked white and pure as it is rarely seen in London. Jack's room looked out upon it. He fixed his eyes on the glaring white expanse; it pleased him like everything that was cold and pure. The flakes were still falling through the air, white and silent, denser and denser. A great peace had descended upon the earth.

At last he turned away from the widow; he was not yet full dressed. Standing before the mirror, he began to shave. He now shaved every day, and again bestowed upon his dress the punctilious care which is one of the daily habits of every well-bred person. While thus looking into the glass he made a discovery,—namely, that his hair was beginning to turn gray,—yes, that he had a num-



ber of gray hairs around his temples and that lines were appearing on his face. He pushed the mirror nearer to the window and smiled. He looked like a man of forty. Yes, his wish was granted, he had grown old; youth lay behind him. He stretched his long limbs; he would have liked to whistle. One must be six-and-twenty to rejoice over the first white hairs.

At the same time the first desire to work which he had felt since his sickness stirred within him. When he came down to breakfast, he asked Mary what had been done with his painting materials. She replied that they had all been put into the great hall which Sarah had formerly used for her children's temperance meetings. The northern end was wholly of glass, the other windows were completely darkened by blinds and curtains. She was using it temporarily as a studio. She would be glad to give him, "the more eminent artist," as she smilingly expressed it, the best place and the best light. After breakfast Jack really did go to the work-room his cousin had improvised. The platform on which the long-haired house-painter, now Jack's Cousin Bray, had given his terrifying musical performances, and the Rev. Jessaiah Juniper had made hell burn for the poor youngsters in his lectures, was removed.

Jack looked for the horrible sentences painted on the walls, but most of them were covered with studies.

To his great surprise he soon perceived that the majority of the latter had come from "his factory," as he expressed it.



"Who has brought my masterpieces here?" he inquired, in pleased astonishment.

Mary blushed as she replied, "I thought you might be glad to see a few old acquaintances."

"So the pictures were forwarded here at your desire?" asked Jack, sincerely moved.

"What does it matter?" murmured Mary.

"What does it matter? What does it matter? You are a treasure, Molly." As he spoke he laid both hands affectionately on her shoulders and, drawing her towards him, kissed her forehead. She started back and left the room. At first he moved to detain her, then paused and remained as if rooted to the ground, with his eyes bent on the floor. For the first time since his illness he felt the necessity of smoking. Like many men, he had a fancy that smoking helped him to think, and as soon as any complicated problem occupied his mind he seized a cigarette. He laughed at himself; he could scarcely expect to find either cigars or cigarettes in this house. But just as he was leaving the room his eyes fell upon a little table furnished with a smoker's set. This was another old acquaintance from Paris,—his own little table. There stood the Japanese candlestick with a red candle in it; a forest of matches filled the open jaws of a bronze frog, and in a low, basket-shaped holder the desired cigarettes met his eyes,—the very brand of Russian cigarettes he preferred. He took one out, lighted it, and laid it down again; then he drew a second from the bunch, and smoked it absently, then another and another.



“Strange!” he muttered, under his breath,—  
“strange!”

Mary did not appear at lunch. She had gone to visit an invalid friend—so Mrs. Winter informed her nephew when the latter asked for the young girl.

Mrs. Winter seemed to be very much absorbed in thought.

After lunch Jack went to the improvised studio and daubed a little. But, spite of his brief period of study, he was far too genuine an artist to find pleasure for any length of time in thus improvising on canvas. The occupation wearied him; his thoughts and his eyes wandered from the sketch. A large green-tinted study, which was hung in the best place on the wall, attracted his attention. He recognized the study he had painted in the Park Monceau, and at the same instant recollected a debt which in the total collapse of his business affairs he had entirely forgotten,—the debt to his American art-dealer. It was certainly strange that the man had not sent some urgent reminder.

Jack suddenly became very uneasy. Hastily cleansing his palette, he cleared away the disorder he had caused and went back to the sitting-room.

Mrs. Winter sat by the hearth with a book in her lap. The tea-kettle was bubbling at her side.

“Why, aunt, the tea-kettle is boiling over!” cried Jack.

She looked up at him in bewilderment; her



thoughts evidently had a long road to traverse ere they returned to the tea-kettle.

"Shall I make the tea?" asked Jack, persuasively.

"As you choose," replied Mrs. Winter, without the caressing intonation to which he was accustomed from her lips.

He made the tea. Like many bachelors, he was an adept in its preparation. "Well, aunt?" he said, pouring out a cup for her, in doing which he remembered all her little fancies,—so many lumps of sugar, so many drops of cream. But she paid no attention to these graceful courtesies except to say,—

"Set the cup down and pour out one for yourself, if you like."

Jack felt no inclination to do so. He was not accustomed to such treatment, and resented it. He waited a short time for his aunt to say something more to him, and as she remained silent he rose to leave the room. But before he reached the door Mrs. Winter called him back. "Why don't you take some tea, Jack?" she asked.

"Why do you leave your cup standing?" he queried, in reply.

"I have anxieties, Jack; heavy anxieties."

He turned, threw himself upon a cushion at her feet, and, clasping her wrinkled old hands in his, said, "Will you not confess what troubles you?"

"No," she answered, curtly.

When, irritated by her tone, he asked, "Are you vexed with me, aunt, for any reason?"



She answered, "No, no, Jack, not with you. I am vexed with myself. I was a little short-sighted, —foolish."

"How?" asked Jack, in a low tone. An uncomfortable presentiment began to dawn upon him.

"Oh, you need not know everything!" she replied again, in the harsh tone which she had never used to him until that day.

His foreboding was confirmed. Yet at the same time the change in her manner ceased to anger him. He had guessed the source of her anxieties.

"Do you intend to continue your art-studies in London or in Paris?" asked Mrs. Winter, somewhat abruptly, after a short pause.

"In Paris, aunt, of course," replied Jack; "there can be no indecision on that point. In the first place, it would be unpleasant for me to be obliged to economize in London."

He hesitated: he had touched a sensitive spot; to speak of economy seemed like undervaluing the generous kindness his aunt had shown him. Then he went on, hurriedly: "Of course I shall economize as much as I can; you understand, aunt, that I would not willingly cost you a penny more than is absolutely necessary."

"Yes, yes, yes!" replied Mrs. Winter; "but so long as I live there is no cause to be parsimonious. If your four hundred pounds do not suffice, they are not the limit of everything. True, it will be better for you to accustom yourself betimes to a modest style of living, for, as I said, after my death——"



"Don't talk about such horrible things," interrupted Jack. "I hope that, long before you leave this world, I shall be able to dispense with your generous aid. Surely my art ought soon to be able to afford me a support."

"We will hope so." The old lady took up her teacup.

"That has grown cold. I'll make you a fresh one," Jack proposed.

"Oh, never mind; I like it lukewarm. H'm!—h'm!—h'm!" She cleared her throat several times, and at last said, "Well, Jack, when do you intend to set to work seriously? When do you mean to go to Paris?"

The young man's face crimsoned. "To-morrow!" he exclaimed, trying to spring to his feet. Mrs. Winter held him firmly by both shoulders.

"Nonsense! Don't be so hasty, so quick to take offence. There is no occasion for it. You know how warmly I love you. I shall miss you terribly. But it is no advantage to you to spend your days thus on the strand of life with two women while the broad river flows by. Do you remember the lecture I gave you last autumn? Then the *grippe* was lurking in your veins; that afterwards explained the cause of your apathy. But now you have recovered from this horrible disease. I have allowed time enough for your convalescence. Now away with you; the sooner the better. Plunge into the stream of life and see how it bears you on."

After a short revery Jack roused himself and



answered, "You are right, aunt; I will go. I'll pack my knapsack this very week." Then he paused a moment before asking, "Did no letters come during my illness?"

"Yes, business letters. Mary has them; she will give them to you. We kept them lest they should excite you."

"Because you knew that they contained no pleasant tidings," replied Jack, in a tone half laughing, half bitter. "Bills, nothing but bills."

After a time he began again: "Didn't my Paris landlord write? I owe him the last six months' rent. Of course I must try to get rid of that luxurious studio. Unfortunately, I took a three years' lease."

Mrs. Winter seized the poker and began to stir the fire vigorously.

"Yes, we have already talked that matter over," she answered; "but it is easily arranged: Mary will rent the studio herself. She says nothing could be more opportune. I believe she has already had some correspondence with your landlord about it."

"Indeed!" said Jack, slowly. "H'm! and has not my American art-dealer been heard from?"

"Your art-dealer?" observed his aunt, thoughtfully. "Do you owe him anything?"

"Ten thousand francs," Jack murmured.

"He must have forgotten you," replied Mrs. Winter. Then she added, reflectively, "An American *did* call here during your illness. I remember finding his card when I came down from your



room. It was just at the time you were suffering most. I had forgotten him. Mary received him."

"Indeed!—Mary!" repeated Jack. "Mary! Mary seems to have smoothed all the rough places in my business affairs," he muttered; and then added, "She is a splendid girl; if I—if I could only show my gratitude."

An awkward pause followed. Mrs. Winter took off her spectacles and cleaned the glasses. Jack cleared his throat and tried several times to speak, but could not finish either of his sentences.

Mrs. Winter seemed to find the situation uncomfortable. After a short time she rose and left the room, saying, "I can't idle away all my time with you. I—I must write some letters."

Jack remained alone. At first he stirred the fire with the poker, then walked up and down the apartment, and finally sat down at the piano and began to drum the melody of "Auld Robin Gray" on the keys with one finger. An odor of camphor, a breath of keen wintry air, suddenly swept across his cheeks with a pleasant sense of coolness. He glanced around. Mary, still in her hat and sealskin coat, was standing on the threshold. She had brought the fresh air with her from the street.

"How do you do, Mary? How late you are!" he hastily exclaimed, in an embarrassed, exaggeratedly cordial manner. He had lost the reins of self-control and was trying to grasp them.

"Isn't mother here?" asked Mary, advancing a little farther into the room.



"No. She went away a moment ago to write some letters."

"I'll look for her," remarked Mary.

Before Jack could make up his mind whether to detain her or not she herself changed her intention, and, coming to the hearth, said,—

"But first I should like a cup of tea."

"The tea is cold. I'll make a fresh cup for you."

"Can you?" asked Mary, almost archly.

"Oh, you shall see!" he answered. He was glad to do something; he felt that the decisive moment in his life had come. We always feel a desire to defer it.

The tea was ready. Jack filled a cup for his cousin. She paid him several jesting compliments on the excellence of his brew. Jack did not hear. He knew that he must express some gratitude for the great kindness and thoughtfulness she had shown him. At last he began: "Mary, you know that you—ah, how shall I say it?—I mean—that I—that I feel a little ashamed—deeply ashamed! How can I discharge my debts to you?"

Mary set her teacup down. Her face crimsoned; she looked pretty, and the slowly gathering dusk lent her fair face an added charm. "I don't know what you are talking about," she answered.

"Oh, Mary!" He moved a little nearer and took her hand in his. "Your mother has told me——"

"My mother did very wrong to tell you anything!" cried Mary, more impetuously than usual.

"Why, it was natural that I should inquire



about the letters which had come during my illness, and afterwards ask who had soothed the importunity of the few creditors whom my means, in the final break-up of my affairs, were not sufficient to satisfy," replied Jack.

Mary's blush deepened, and she turned her head away. More than a minute elapsed ere she again faced her cousin. "Let us settle these foolish matters and put an end to them once for all," she said. "You know how unjust my father's will was. It is a commentary on our legislation that such a thing was possible in England. In it he bequeathed all my step-mother's fortune to us two girls. I never considered myself the owner of this money, and if I have now relieved you from certain embarrassments, it was done with my step-mother's property, which I manage, and for which she herself could have found no use more satisfactory."

Jack was amazed at the delicacy with which Mary arranged the awkward situation. He had not expected so much tact to be blended with her stiff prudery, for he did not suspect how far above her usual height of feeling, at least for the moment, love can bear even the coldest woman. Perhaps he had not yet clearly perceived that Mary was in love with him, at least he had done his best to leave himself in doubt.

With the imprudence to which emotion leads any really chivalrous man who feels deep gratitude to a girl, Jack exclaimed, "Mary! May God grant me the possibility of discharging my prosaic



material debt to you! Perhaps I may succeed in making some return for what you have done for me, but the way of rendering the service, that—I can never repay, unless you will permit me to devote my whole life to you.”

He paused suddenly, as if startled by his own words, and hastily added, “But, of course, in my present circumstances, that is out of the question.” Again he paused; he felt the lameness of his retreat. His breath came in gasps; he would gladly have run away, yet he knew that he could do nothing save await her decision. There was a moment of panic, followed by the consoling thought, surely she will not, she cannot accept my hand as payment on account of my obligations to her. Then came the old depressing lassitude, a sense of indifference; either way youth was dead, life lay behind him. Then Mary raised her drooping head, and, with a radiant glance, held out both hands. “Why should it be out of the question?” she asked; “must my few shillings prevent us from being happy? I’ll give them all to you, that, from this day, you can no longer reproach me with them.”

He did what he was obliged to do under the circumstances, took her in his arms and kissed her. But even at that moment of rapturous emotion he felt the rigidity of her whole figure.

The door opened, Mrs. Winter entered. A low cry of horror escaped her lips. It was too late.



## VI.

THE wedding took place in mid-April; a very simple wedding, celebrated, according to the wish of both bride and bridegroom, in the little Protestant church where Jack had dreamed away so many Sunday hours.

During the ceremony Mary was deeply moved; Jack felt somewhat sleepy, yet glad that it was over at last. He carried with him from the church the conviction that he would now be a sedate married man, who henceforth would shun all follies. He even felt no disposition to commit them. Every emotion was hushed within him. Never did bridegroom leave a church at the side of his young wife with more phlegmatic indifference. His blood flowed rather more slowly through his veins than usual. Yet he was filled with the noblest feelings and best intentions. He meant to make Mary very happy, which, as he said to himself, could not be difficult, as he asked nothing more from life.

Scarcely had he pursued this thought to the end when he realized how monstrous his inference really was! A warm sympathy for the young creature who was united to him overcame him. He passed his hand across his brow, and his breath



came more slowly. Why should he think, just at this moment, how totally different his feelings would have been if, instead of Mary——

His brain whirled. To atone for the sin committed in his thoughts, he clasped Mary's hand and raised it to his lips.

After returning home they entered the pretty sitting-room looking out upon the garden, where was enacted the touching scene which must be performed after every wedding,—all the members of the family kissed one another. Jack was not quite sure whether he kissed Mary or Sarah; in his absence of mind and exuberance of good-will he even kissed his brother-in-law, the musical room-decorator, which, as it is not the custom in England for men to kiss each other, created some little amazement. Mary, who was in an excited mood, laughed at it, and Jack grew embarrassed. The only really affectionate kiss which he gave that memorable morning was bestowed on his Aunt Jane, who, greatly agitated by the universal family embracing, stood a little apart, very erect in her old-fashioned pearl-gray silk dress, thick enough to stand alone, and trimmed with yellow Honiton lace perfumed with lavender. She held in her convulsively clasped hands a white lace handkerchief, and her features wore an expression of tenderness blended with ill-repressed anxiety.

Directly after the breakfast the young couple were to set out on their journey to Folkstone, *via* Folkstone to Ostend, thence by way of Brussels across Germany to Italy. This was the wedding-



tour planned by Mary according to the most approved models. Jack had quietly assented to all his bride's proposals.

They were obliged to wait for breakfast,—to wait a whole hour. Jack had no better idea what to do with his time than any of the others present. Several congratulatory telegrams arrived. Mary opened them with trembling fingers and glowing cheeks. She was pleased that even formal acquaintances showed so sincere an interest in her happiness.

Jack was very indifferent. He entered into elaborate explanations that congratulations were merely official formalities,—there was no heart in them. Letters of condolence, on the contrary, were usually sincere. The nobler impulses of the human soul were not sufficiently cultivated to rejoice sincerely in our neighbors' good fortune. Interest in our neighbors' fate first became genuine where there was no room for envy. Pity was the only real form of sympathy, because it usually went hand in hand with malice.

In the midst of this unpleasant banter a telegram of congratulation was received from Sir Bryan and Lady Clara Ferrars, who were in Italy. It was very long, contained phrases unusually warm for cool English manners, and closed with the words, "We hope to meet the young couple on their wedding-journey through Italy."

"There, Jack! Now tell me whether there are not some noble human beings who rejoice with all their hearts in our happiness!" cried Mary, triumphantly.



Jack made no reply. This demonstration from his relatives afforded him little pleasure. Every word seemed to say, "How delighted my brother is to be relieved from any further responsibility on my account! How glad he feels that he need have no further anxiety about paying my debts or being compelled to blush for my shabbiness!" At the same moment he perceived for the first time what an impression his marriage must make, not only upon his nearest relatives but on the world in general. He had settled down and provided for himself.

The blood mounted to his cheeks, furious rage seemed fairly to choke him,—rage against all who ventured to view the step he had taken from this stand-point. He himself, he could swear, had not thought for a single instant of improving his circumstances when he wooed Mary. He had—yes, what had he really intended? Nothing at all. Everything had come about by chance.

The wedding-breakfast did not yet appear. Sir Bryan's telegram passed from Mary's hands, which fairly trembled with delight, to her sister's.

"That really *is* beautiful!" Sarah murmured; "really like kinspeople,—h'm! And did they send you a handsome present, too, Mary?"

"Oh, yes; some very pretty emeralds,—beautiful gems."

"Indeed! Show them to me!" the supporter of temperance urged her sister.

Mary went to get the ornament. When she brought it Sarah fell into a sort of ecstasy at the



sight of the green stones resting on the white velvet lining of the case.

The jewels were really beautiful. In his delight at the saving of expense to him secured by his brother's marriage, Sir Bryan had considered it a duty to be generous to this brother's bride.

After long and careful examination of the gems, Sarah remarked, "I suppose you'll wear them when you go to court?"

"I haven't thought yet about going to court," replied Mary, with a glance at Jack, who was leaning wearily back in a chair.

"But of course Lady Clara will present you," said Sarah, who still held the jewels in her hands, sighing heavily.

"Do you think so, Jack?" asked Mary, approaching her husband and stroking his cheeks.

"Why, certainly, if you go," Jack answered.

"You would wrong me if you thought I aspired to be presented at court from—from—ambition," Mary hastened to assure him. "Of course I should like to fill the position I occupy as your wife as well as possible, but only on your account; so far as I am concerned, I shall find my heaven anywhere with you, Jackie. In a secluded cottage in Devonshire—the country is so beautiful there—or in a little palace in Park Lane,—I have no choice. Where do you intend to live, in the country or in London?"

"I don't know; I haven't decided yet; for the present we will travel," Jack answered.

"Yet some plan must be formed," remarked



Sarah, sententiously, as she at last closed the case of emeralds. "There are two points to be considered: you will be more exposed to the temptations of Satan in fashionable society than elsewhere,—I mean the temptations of pleasure-seeking and vanity. If you are afraid of yielding, then avoid the gay world. But if you feel strong enough to resist these allurements, seek it. It is your duty. Seek it in order to lead those who are blinded by its glitter into the light of eternal truth. There is no greater merit in imparting religious ideas to the Hottentots or the proletarians of the East End of London than in bringing the well-bred barbarians of the circles in which you will move to a proper realization of the seriousness of life, and of death."

Sarah had spoken in a raised voice, with eyes uplifted to heaven; she had unconsciously adopted the tone and bearing which she formerly assumed to impress her audience when making her addresses on the platform.

Bray clasped his hands admiringly and murmured, "Well said; really, very well said."

Sarah was in full swing: "Go into the world as a missionary, to preach the old gospel in a new form, to spread abroad the great ideas of temperance, from which alone the regeneration of the world can be expected."

"An extremely happy expression!" said Bray.

Sarah continued to exhort from an imaginary platform: "Yes, the grand idea of temperance will regenerate the world, stand sponsor as it were



for mankind a second time. Asceticism is a sterilizing monstrosity; temperance is bestowed by nature and is fruitful. The roots of modern evils—believe me—are alcoholism and vanity!” She paused and gazed around the circle.

“Magnificent! The spirit of your mission has taken powerful hold of you to-day!” cried Bray.

“Yes, yes! I feel it!” said Sarah; then turning to Mary, she added, “If you are presented at court you must try to arrange for me to deliver an address in the presence of the queen.”

Jack made a terrible grimace. Mary stroked his head.

“What is the matter, Jack?” she asked. “You look so pale. I am almost afraid that you will have a relapse.” She looked anxiously at him.

“Yes,” he murmured, through his clinched teeth, “I almost believe I shall.”

“Oh, don’t have such gloomy thoughts!” said Sarah, sagely. “Perhaps it is only a little spring-fever, which is now stirring in all nature, even in the dead wood; hear how the furniture creaks! I could scarcely sleep last night; it seemed as if I heard pistol-shots all around me.”

Jack bent his head; his fingers were tightly interlaced, and he clasped and unclasped them convulsively. Spring-fever! Spring-fever! The word struck him like a blow. “Isn’t breakfast served yet?” he said, in an irritated tone, turning to his young wife.

Twenty-four hours had passed, twenty-four more,



—a whole week had elapsed since Jack Ferrars had put the wedding-ring on Mary Winter's finger.

He had striven honestly to do his duty. It was not without a certain sense of satisfaction that he had found the momentary excitement occasioned by his marriage yielding anew to the dull indifference and listlessness which had led to it. He entered into all his young wife's suggestions, cared for her comfort as men of his breeding are accustomed to do for any lady with whom they travel, provided for her amusement, attended her in the daytime to the art-exhibitions in the cities which they visited, and in the evenings went with her to the theatre. He endured her caresses, nay, tried to return them. He let her drag him about to the shops, and patiently carried small parcels home for her. In short, he did everything which could be expected of a dutiful young husband.

So they went on from city to city towards the South. Mary wrote rapturous letters concerning all the splendors she saw with Jack, and gave her step-mother a detailed account of the happiness of her honey-moon. Only, she added at the end of every letter, Jack was still far from well; he looked pale and weak, had a poor appetite, but she hoped all these symptoms would vanish as soon as he reached the South. She hoped so much from the South! He would surely recover there; they were going to loiter from one beautiful place to another, and if it should grow too warm, seek refuge at an especially picturesque sea-side resort. For—on



this point she was fully determined—she would not return home until Jack had entirely regained his health.

Mrs. Winter read the letters with a vague sense of anxiety; the young husband's persistent depression confirmed all her fears.

Meanwhile, the pair journeyed on, farther and farther towards the South, and spite of Jack's resistance, the constant change of scene, the excitement of visiting the various art-collections, the observation of the slight variations which, in these levelling days, distinguish the customs of one country from those of another, did their work. He grew more cheerful, his interest awakened, he looked—past his wife into God's wide world; he began to make plans for the future. Then he suddenly heard at his side a woman's high, shrill voice saying, "A penny for your thoughts, Jackie."

And to save himself the trouble of invention, he answered, with the jest hallowed by its antiquity, "They are not worth a penny. I was thinking of you."

She was content with the reply, embraced and kissed him, and life pursued the even tenor of its course.

Spring loitered on its way; it seemed to grow colder and colder every day. The earth was brown and the branches were bare; the green shimmer hovering around them would not unfold. An icy wind blew, stifling all life in the bud. Jack and Mary had passed through the Tyrol in a white



whirl of snow-flakes, which fell cold and mute upon the ground. In many places the engines had difficulty in forcing a passage through the masses of snow heaped up by the wind. The train which was bearing them southward rushed along between two high, smoke-blackened walls of snow. Each sat in a corner, muffled in furs. From time to time the young wife clasped one of her husband's hands or tried to attract his attention by some tender glance. He answered these loving demonstrations by a mechanical movement of the lips, which he had adopted during the honey-moon weeks. He asked if it would be unpleasant for her if he kept the window open. She laughingly shook her head, and answered that when she sat opposite to him she always felt as if the sun was shining into her face.

The air blew against him, cold and keen,—a chilling wintry air. Of the beautiful land of the Tyrol he saw nothing, at least nothing except two smoke-blackened walls of snow between which the train rushed on. Until darkness closed in, he gazed steadily at the monotonous white masses and inhaled the icy air. Not until he heard Mary cough did he notice that it was time to shut the window.

Then he arranged a couch for his bride, kissed her, patted her on the shoulder, smoothed the silk-covered cushion under her cheek; in short, behaved exactly as a pattern young husband should; after which he leaned back in his corner and, as usual, strove to think of nothing. But this was less easy



than might have been expected. Thoughts came whether he desired them or not; he began to plan his future life.

Of course he would settle in Paris; the atmosphere was stimulating to an artist. So far as his residence was concerned he would be guided in the choice of location, arrangement of rooms, furniture, etc., solely by Mary's wishes,—only he must insist on one thing, he must have a studio away from his home. He said nothing about this now, for once, when he had mentioned that he thought it better to keep his workshop separate from his dwelling, Mary had started up, exclaiming, "Oh, Jackie! My darling! How horrible! I really couldn't bear not being able to run in and embrace you ten times an hour!"

"That would be very charming," replied Jack, "but not exactly helpful to my work. To become a superior artist a man must keep aloof from even the pleasantest diversions while devoting himself to his professional labor, and concentrate all his powers of thought and feeling upon his work."

"But why need you become a superior artist, so long as you are a happy man?" Mary had answered, pouting, while she threw her arms around his neck and kissed him. He was startled by the vehemence of her caresses. When he married her, he had expected to have at his side a quiet, sensible life-partner, who, not being inclined to tender demonstrations herself, would expect none from him. He had reckoned without his host.

The little conversation now returned to his



memory as he was planning his future life. His brain fairly reeled. No, deeply as he felt his obligations to his wife, he could not yield this point,—he must be undisturbed while at work. But suppose she should insist? The blood seethed in his veins, rose and fell. His hands grew icy cold, yet his finger-tips burned. Great Heaven! What did this mean? whence came this feeling of despair? He had already begun to grow accustomed to his wife, and to-day—— He sighed heavily. So long as she was his betrothed bride, so long as her reserve towards him touched him, all was well; now—now——

But she would become quieter, and he must learn to prize her; she was worthy of it. He began to enumerate her good qualities; there was a long inventory. He had not completed the list of her merits when his thoughts grew confused. He fell asleep. He dreamed of tangled, exciting scenes; broken reminiscences of long-forgotten events blended together in his mind; then a breath of warm life suddenly mingled with these dull, oppressive images. The exquisite figure of Angiolina appeared before him, though indistinctly, as if veiled by a white mist. He strove to approach her, but could not; he seemed rooted to the earth unable to stir. This lasted a long time. All at once the gray veil which separated her from him vanished, and he beheld her clearly in her superb, melancholy, yearning beauty. She began to move,—held out her arms to him,—he clasped her in his own. Her lips hovered over his without touching



them. It seemed as if he were dying of longing for those lips which he could not find. Now—now he felt her kiss burn on his closed lids. Giddiness overpowered him. He strove to hold her,—draw her closely to him, and at the same time open his eyes and gaze his fill. She had vanished, and everything grew fiery-red,—blood-red.

A jerk,—the shrill ringing of bells; he woke,—the sun had been scorching his eyes. Where was he? What had happened? Where were the ice-flowers which had veiled the windows? Melted into tears, which, trickling down the panes, dropped upon the greenish-brown carpet of the railway carriage. And the walls of snow? Jack looked out. What was this? Spring, the wondrous, gleeful, sun-steeped spring was before him. An Italian village, surrounded by trees laden with white blossoms, and in the background frowning mountains covered with shimmering tints of green. Spring! spring!

Jack gazed in mingled ecstasy and dread. His breathing was labored, and the blood pulsed hotly in his veins.

Youth had waked within his soul. Just at that moment he felt an arm around his neck, a breath on his cheek. “How beautiful! How beautiful, Jack! Nature has adorned herself in honor of our love.” Mary was standing at his side. But, for the first time since his marriage, he could not force himself to return her caress. A horrible feeling stifled him. He realized that his repugnance to his wife was unconquerable. Why had he mar-



ried! Instead of holding to his lips the glowing beaker of love, he had wearily swallowed a sleeping potion. But the potion did not work. And suddenly he heard the wailing refrain of the melody which had floated to his ears through the warm evening air at Meudon; he saw Angiolina's eyes, he inhaled the fragrance of the glycine mingled with the odor of the freshly-chopped logs, and heard distinctly, more and more distinctly, "Qu'as-tu fait, qu'as-tu fait de ta jeunesse!"

The reign of spring grew more and evident in the land,—no such wealth of bloom was ever remembered, even in Italy, nothing like this luxuriance of leafage which, after being repressed by the unusual length of the wintry cold, now suddenly leaped forth towards the sun. From station to station the vegetation grew richer, the fragrance heavier, the air warmer. How wonderful it all is!—these Italian cities with their weather-beaten, gray magnificence, around which saucy youth winds freshly blooming roses, the stately, majestic palaces and churches, and the bright picturesque beauty at their feet. And flowers everywhere,—white acacia-trees rising above convent walls green with mould, roses garlanding slender marble columns, iris and deep-red poppies growing amid the tall grass in secluded cloister court-yards, cut flowers in baskets of woven willow dripping with water, offered to foreigners, withered blossoms lying trampled on the pavement. And everything is fragrant,—such fragrance, such never-



to-be forgotten fragrance,—the perfume of Italian cities in May, a subtle odor of ancient masonry, wax-candles, incense, mould, roses, acacias, and iris,—all blended with the sultry spring mist which rises from the earth and overarched by the gray sirocco clouds.

“How wonderfully beautiful it all is, and how one might enjoy it!” Jack said to himself.

But he enjoyed nothing. In the midst of this paradise he walked with drooping head, his mind ever occupied by the one thought: “If only it were all over!”

But it will never be over,—at least not soon; it may last thirty or forty years yet, always living on and on like a galley-slave, dragging the heavy leaden ball to the end!

Jack felt a constant longing to run, to move swiftly, abruptly, upset, destroy something; yet he laid his hand on his brow and asked himself, “Am I crazy, or am I on the verge of it?” and calmed himself, resolutely controlled himself, strove to do his duty, and had not uttered a single impatient word to Mary since he left at her side the church where his execution had taken place.

In reply to Mary’s anxious questions why he looked so pale and troubled, he answered, untiringly, “It’s the sirocco.”

And it was the sirocco,—the sirocco! the demon of the spring!

Poor Jack!

It is in Bologna. Forty-eight hours ago they



reached the Hotel Brun, where Herr Frank received them at the entrance, holding in his hand a long list of all who had secured rooms by a telegram; the Ferrars were on the list.

Herr Frank affably informed them that he had reserved a room for them, a splendid apartment on the second story, and a small one for the maid. In reply to Jack's angry question why there was only one when he had ordered, as usual, a bedchamber and parlor, Herr Frank answered that the number of applicants had been too great; for the present it was unfortunately impossible; perhaps during the next few days there might be changes; at present——

Mary interposed by lightly patting Jack's arm and whispering, "What does it matter, dear?"

And Jack realized that he was on the point of making a scene without rhyme or reason, and let the matter drop.

For forty-eight hours they had lived together in the Hotel Brun in a single room. Never before had Jack been so entirely unable to escape his wife, even for a moment; never had the compulsory tenderness imposed by his situation been so heavy a burden.

So long as they had a sitting-room at their disposal he could escape from Mary's society for half an hour, could rest while she wrote her letters—thank heaven, she was in the habit of writing very long letters—and while she was dressing. But now he could not call a single moment his own.

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It was after dinner,—of course they had eaten theirs at a small table away from the long one,—a small table which, in honor of their newly-wedded state, perhaps betrayed to him by the maid, perhaps by the fresh appearance of their luggage, the attentive landlord had adorned with a bouquet of roses. Now they were seated under the colonnade beside the entrance into the court-yard of the old Palazzo Malvasi, whence the Hotel Brun rose. The wan May twilight—a mere whitish-gray mist—floated through the air, dimmed the colors of the two flags above the portal, and flung a light veil over the little Japanese climbing roses, whose deep-red and clear-white blossoms appeared amid the delicate tremulous foliage clinging to the pillars.

Mary had arrayed herself for the meal in a light-blue blouse, which she wore with an ordinary gray woollen skirt,—a silk blouse with a travel-worn woollen skirt is the *table-d'hôte* style adopted by all Englishwomen. Jack said so to himself, as he fixed his eyes on her. She was exactly like all the Englishwomen of a certain class, all Englishwomen who belong to the world of boredom,—the world of the educated middle classes. Exquisitely neat, well cared for, highly educated, well-bred, well-read, narrow-minded, a trifle stunted both physically and mentally, prudish, cool, a pattern of reserve to the lover, but to the husband tender to obtrusiveness,—ay, and to what a degree of obtrusiveness!

Jack secretly wondered whether all women were so persistent, whether a few of them, at least, did not wait for some demonstration of affection on the



husband's part, and show, even after marriage, a certain degree of reserve, partly from modesty, partly—yes, partly from coquetry?

Mary had no idea of coquetry towards Jack, but she was equally ignorant of the value of reserve.

He was her husband, her property; she had a right to him and his caresses.

Absorbed in these reflections, Jack silently drank his coffee,—Mary took none. She only cast loving glances at him and smiled, which, thanks to her prominent teeth, was not very becoming.

Formerly, he had never been annoyed by these prominent teeth, now—— He could not see Mary's mouth without dreading a kiss. How often he had felt those teeth on his lips!

"How dull you are, dear!" she said, jestingly, after a time, tapping his hand; "we have been sitting here fifteen minutes, and you haven't spoken a word yet."

"Nothing specially brilliant has occurred to me, and I didn't want to bore you with stupid sayings," Jack replied.

"Oh, you goose!" cried Mary; then after a short pause she added, "Have you arranged any plan for the rest of our journey? Where shall we go from here?"

"To Florence, of course! People always go to Florence from Bologna," replied Jack.

"Yes, but we don't wish to stay in Florence."

"Why not?" asked Jack, carelessly.

"In the first place, we both know the city thoroughly," Mary remarked, positively.



"Speak for yourself, Mary," returned Jack, phlegmatically; "I couldn't say so. I spent six weeks in Florence, but I merely know enough to make me long to see it again."

"Six weeks!" Mary repeated, in surprise. "You must have had very bad weather, or—or you went into society too much. We were there only six days, and I believe we really saw everything."

"Which is recorded in Murray," murmured Jack, half under his breath.

"Oh, you naughty, sarcastic fellow!" cried Mary, first shaking her finger roguishly at him, then seizing him tenderly by the arm and shaking him. "But no matter whether I know Florence thoroughly or not, it wouldn't be desirable to remain there long just now. There is a terrible epidemic of typhus fever; all the foreigners are avoiding it."

"So much the better; at least we shan't be compelled to live in one room when we engaged two," cried Jack. Then, startled at his own remark, he added, "Are you afraid of the fever, Mary?"

"Not for myself," replied the young wife, "but I should fear it for you, and you would for me, I know that, you naughty man, in spite of your bad jokes."

"Yes, of course, of course!" Jack babbled this like a lesson learned by rote. Then he saw by Mary's expression that she expected some demonstration from him. He kissed her hand. "You are perfectly right, perfectly right," he hastily assured her; "I should never forgive myself—if you—if—"



that is—I mean I should never get over it. No, no, we must not challenge peril,—we won't stay in Florence. Do you wish to go directly down to Rome? I think that would be the best plan."

"Yes, but—just now—well, to be frank, just now I would rather not go to Rome."

"Why, the fever season doesn't begin until June," said Jack.

"Yes—but—the Brays are there." Mary laughed, with a slight shade of embarrassment.

"The Brays? Who are the Brays?" Jack raised his eyebrows in wonder.

"Sarah and her husband. Have you forgotten that the ex-house-painter"—Mary uttered the word very arrogantly—"was named Bray?"

"Ah, yes; true. Isn't he a house-painter now?" asked Jack.

"No."

"Only his wife's husband?"

"I assure you that gives him plenty to do; he is devoted to the cause, body and soul."

"To what?" asked Jack, with curling lip,—“to Sarah?"

"No; to the cause, to Sarah's mission. They both fly from one temperance meeting to another; he writes out her speeches, attends to her correspondence, cares for her health, etc."

"In short, he is the impresario of the Muse of Temperance," said Jack, "and they are sojourning at present in Rome. Ah!"

"Yes; she is to give three lectures there."

"But, my dear Mary," observed Jack, "I really



don't see why that should prevent our going to Rome. I should find a great deal of amusement in attending one of these temperance lectures. Of course Impresario Bray gives the muse a glass of brandy to strengthen her before she goes on the platform."

"Jack, you are incorrigible!" cried Mary, perfectly delighted with her husband's jesting mood; "but you see, I know it might be amusing to attend these lectures, if we were not among the lecturer's nearest relatives."

"The relationship doesn't trouble me," Jack answered, coldly, somewhat unjustly irritated by his wife's aristocratic follies.

"Nor me," Mary hastened to assure him; "but—but, unfortunately, Sarah hasn't a particle of tact. She would join us,—she would certainly expect us to take her to the embassy. I should like to go into society a little in Rome—well, surely you understand——"

"Yes, I am beginning to understand a great many things," Jack muttered; then added, somewhat bluntly, "Then where do you want to go?"

"To Perugia, dear," cooed Mary.

"To Perugia! What attracts you to that picturesque spot,—the Peruginos—or the Hotel Brufani?"

"Perugia offers a remarkable union of artistic and rural beauty," replied Mary.

Again Jack muttered under his breath, "Murray."

It was the first time that he had been unable



to conquer his feelings of impatience. But Mary had taken no offence; with the extraordinary skill peculiar to women who are blindly in love, she always managed to justify his conduct. She merely repeated her former remark: "Oh, you naughty, sarcastic fellow! Don't tease me perpetually about Murray. Murray is very nice. It contains a quantity of useful information. But, to be perfectly frank, it's neither on account of the Perugino paintings nor for the sake of the beautiful scenery that I wish we could stay in Perugia,—no, but, as you know, your brother is there with his wife."

"That is another reason for avoiding Perugia. Bryan keeps me away, as Sarah drives you from Rome," growled Jack.

"Ah, Jack, don't be so resentful," whispered Mary, clasping her hands around his arm. "Let me make peace between you. It is not wholly unaccountable that your brother should not have been quite satisfied with you. But, since our marriage, he has let no opportunity pass without giving us some proof of his sympathy. Lady Clara has written me such a kind letter; she is very anxious to meet us in Perugia."

"Ah, so that's the way the wind blows!" Jack muttered between his teeth. He could not bear to hear his brother's name mentioned. "So that's the way the wind blows! No, Mary, it can't be. I'll do what I can to please you, but to go to Perugia for an affectionate family meeting is out of the question. I am no hypocrite."

"But, Jack!" Mary murmured, plaintively,



"surely you understand that—that it would be pleasant for me to be on friendly terms with your nearest relatives. You always say that Lady Clara is so nice."

"Clara is charming, but I don't think you two will care much for each other," replied Jack.

A pause followed, then Mary asked, "Have you drunk your coffee?"

"Long ago," he answered.

"Well, then, we might go up-stairs; I should like to write a few letters."

Jack sighed. He could not bring himself to be shut up in the same room with Mary just at that moment. He must be alone a little while,—even were it only fifteen minutes. "Go up; I——"

"And what will you do?"

"I—I'll take a little walk."

"Then I will go too!" cried Mary, promptly.

Jack felt as if some one was scattering a handful of hail-stones down his back. "If you wish," he murmured.

This time Mary could not deceive herself in regard to his reluctance to accept her companionship.

"Well; I don't wish to be a burden to you," she said, in an offended tone, passing by him on her way to the staircase.

Tortured by the stings of conscience, Jack hurried after her. "Why, Mary!" he cried, seizing her hand, hardly knowing at first how to apologize. Then a bright idea entered his head. "Mary, haven't you guessed why I wanted to go out alone?"



Just once? Your birthday comes next week—and I—saw something—which——”

“Oh, you dear, kind Jack!” cried Mary, rapturously.

“Well, another time don’t spoil my plan,” returned Jack, almost reprovngly. “I was anticipating so much pleasure in my little surprise.”

“Good-by, dear, good-by!” said Mary. Pressing a kiss on his coat-sleeve as she passed, she ran up-stairs. He was alone.

For a moment he stood bewildered, rooted to the earth, holding his little brown felt hat in his hand. He began to turn it round and round, wondering, “Why did I tell all those lies?” and at the same time his own voice echoed in his ears, saying to Mary, “I am no hypocrite!”

Well, he certainly was no hypocrite by nature; if ever any one had a frank disposition it was he; if ever any one found it difficult to syllable even the smallest conventional lie it was he. But, good heavens!—he realized it for the first time—by his marriage with Mary he had forfeited his right to be perfectly truthful; the most sacred right of every individual, since it is connected with the freedom of the soul. How could he confess the truth to Mary,—admit that every caress he bestowed upon her was the result of a self-conquest which daily became more difficult? Had he a right to allow Mary a glimpse of his real feelings, a right to say to her, “I cannot love you?” No, he must spare her; as matters stood it was his duty



to spare her. He could do nothing except keep up her delusion by every means in his power.

He would be forced to play the hypocrite all his life. If he sometimes carried this far enough to buy a moment's rest it did not matter, he said to himself, and then shrank in horror at his own sophisms. No, it was a mistaken idea to confound the self-control which he was obliged to maintain towards Mary with hypocrisy. The self-control imposed by his sense of duty was far different from the hypocrisy which he summoned to the aid of his unauthorized desire for liberty. He wished to do his duty. He stamped violently, then sighed and shrugged his shoulders. What did the best intentions avail in such a case! No man of his age could be satisfied with life as he had planned it, endure the burden he had taken upon himself, without becoming morally dishonest. The nervous irritation arising from spending every hour in the day with a person who affords us no intellectual aliment and is physically unsympathetic, is too great for us not to desire to cast off the restraint temporarily. And as this was impossible without falsehood and hypocrisy, he could not help being a little more false and hypocritical day by day. He would load his wife with attentions to strengthen her faith in his love, and use this faith to—to——



## VII.

MEANWHILE, he had gone out of the hotel into the warm spring twilight. Fragrance surrounded him—the perfume of flowers blended with a somewhat mouldy exhalation common to all cities between dusk and daylight—and music. All Bologna thrills with melody. There might be a horrible discord if the tunes mingled together, but no! As Jack walked on, hugging the wall closely to avoid brushing against the cars on the horse-rail-road, which with modern impertinence had wound its way into even the narrowest streets, he heard only a single air which, falling sweetly on his ears, dominated the chaotic dissonance of the distant medley,—now it was the love-sick melancholy of a Neapolitan folk-song, sung by a woman's voice to the accompaniment of a guitar, sometimes the bold sensuousness of one of the Strauss waltzes, played by a travelling Austrian quartette of stringed instruments. And amid the plashing of the great fountain of Neptune echoed the monotonous tramp of human footsteps passing Jack.

All Bologna was in the street. Wonderfully beautiful Italian women, save that they were a little too short, a shade too stout, with a slightly undulating gait, garments whose lack of taste was



covered by the twilight, and black veils twisted fantastically around their heads, which lent a magical charm to their pallid, passionate loveliness, moved to and fro, usually in pairs, surrounded by groups of cigarette-smoking masculine admirers, whose appearance was commonplace to a degree. The deep, musical tones of their contralto voices stirred Jack strangely; more than one of them raised her heavy eyelids, glancing at him with a look which swept over his face like the slow, sultry sirocco.

He quivered under these glances, which reminded him of things he desired to forget. And amid the languishing Italians his eyes rested on his own countrywomen. How many of them he met! Englishwomen belonging to the same half-stunted, half-cultured class as Mary,—Mary's very image in gait, bearing, and dress; slender and flat-chested, with endless waists and no hips, without a single curve in their figures. How well he knew this type of womanhood!—the inelastic gait, the long flat feet with badly-fitting shoes, the elbows held stiffly back,—all were familiar, even the thin, well-bred voices. Their talk sounded like loud, hissing sounds strung on a breath. He shuddered.

Turning from the colonnades with their *cafés chantants*, their jewellers' shops blazing with diamonds, where he had hastily purchased a present for Mary, he went into the vast, deserted square and approached the cathedral, whose lofty nave and wide transepts sloping earthward made it resemble a huge bird, which, resting momentarily



on the ground, is preparing to rise again towards heaven.

Absorbed in the mystical magnificence of the spectacle, Jack was standing silently before the house of God, when some one exclaimed, "Why, Ferrars! So you are here. I thought I knew those shoulders."

Jack looked round, and, recognizing an old acquaintance, the little journalist Rambert, felt a sensation of sincere pleasure, not unmingled with a sense of discord. Did not Rambert remind him of all sorts of things? The two men shook hands with each other. "You here; a Frenchman in Italy, and not *prix de Rome*!" cried Jack.

"Yes, the world has changed during the last few years, and the Frenchman too," replied Rambert; "we now go to Bayreuth and Naples, learn German and murder Italian. H'm! I am returning from a tour through the little Italian cities, and you, my dear fellow, if I'm not mistaken, are on your wedding-journey. I received the cards in Paris. You married your cousin, Miss Winter, I believe?"

"Yes," murmured Jack.

"A charming young girl, very charming; I congratulate you, Ferrars. The time for wild oats is over."

"Yes, evidently," returned Jack.

In the course of this conversation the journalist had drawn Jack out of the misty shadow of the cathedral into the glitter of light under the colonnades, the realm of the *café chantant* music, where



foreign and native ladies were slowly strolling to and fro.

In front of the Café X. stood a hand-organ in the shape of a piano, one of those mechanical pianos which are such a nuisance in Bologna.

This uncanny instrument pours forth with the monotonous regularity of a sewing-machine the most difficult pieces performed by virtuosos, never pausing an instant to take breath, harshly, shrilly, with giddy rapidity. It sounds like the playing of some crazy virtuoso who has lost all perception of gradations of sound while gaining a threefold degree of power and speed. Jack longed to stop his ears, but as the Frenchman, talking incessantly of Paris and old acquaintances, asked him to sit down and eat an ice with him, he took a seat and ordered one.

"Among other things, guess whom I met in the course of my Italian journey," observed Rambert.

"How could I?" replied Jack, absently.

"One of your old flames."

"One of my old flames?" repeated Jack, slowly.

"Have you forgotten all of them, as is proper for a good husband?" questioned the Frenchman, teasingly.

Jack shrugged his shoulders. It was the sole answer of which he felt capable at the moment.

"Yet you must try to recall this special flame, She was worthy of being held in remembrance," replied Rambert.

"Of whom are you speaking?" asked Jack, slowly. He seemed to be wholly engrossed in



shielding with his hand the flame of the match which he had just struck to light his cigar.

"Of whom? Good heavens! Of Angiolina! Poor Angiolina!" murmured the Frenchman.

"Of Angiolina?" Jack raised his eyebrows. What progress in hypocrisy he had made during the past two hours! "Ah, yes; you mean the Italian about whom—when was it?—I made myself so utterly ridiculous," he said, still with the same drawling articulation and immovable face.

"Oh, don't speak so contemptuously of her," replied Rambert; "if you had seen her as I did, the mockery would have died on your lips."

Jack lighted a second match and bent over it. "Is she so badly off?" he asked.

"She is one of the most wretched creatures in the world."

"How?"

"You have had the pleasure of making her amiable husband's acquaintance."

Jack knocked the ashes from the end of his cigar with the tip of his little finger. "Yes," he replied; "and on that occasion I really did wonder a little at the good taste with which the poetic Angiolina had chosen her life-partner."

"You were terribly severe on the poor woman," said Rambert, who had evidently long since forgotten his own cynical comments on the situation. "I think, if you knew the story of her life, you would regret your cruelty."

"The story of her life,—I do know it!" cried Jack. "Sylvain told me."



“What did he tell you?”

“Oh, various romantic, unpleasant things. According to his account, Angiolina is a member of a good family, the daughter of a Marchese X. Y., and married Minelli after running away with this dissipated genius.”

“But that isn’t so,—I told him that myself. Minelli had made the statement to me; but it isn’t true!” exclaimed Rambert, indignantly.

“Then what is the story?” asked Jack, gruffly.

“Angiolina is the daughter of Prince Gandini, but not his legitimate child. Her mother was a Russian singer, who, after the girl’s birth, is said to have devoted herself solely to the prince, with whom she lived in the Gandini palace, where she received almost the same respect as a wedded wife.

“Do you remember the great Palazzo in the Trastevere? The court-yard faced the Tiber, and in one corner was a young Bacchante, which was sold to the Louvre two years ago. A Bacchante with a torn——”

“Oh, yes, I remember the Bacchante,” said Jack, rudely interrupting the prolix Frenchman; “but tell me something more about this wonderful Russian singer who received almost the same respect as a wedded wife.”

“Almost the same respect as a wedded wife! Surely you know what that means! That the servants obeyed her orders, and the various young and old men who, in such cases, call at the house—of course, under these circumstances a woman



must forego the society of her own sex—treated her courteously, without attempting to pay any lover-like attentions.”

“That is a great deal for the companion of an Italian prince,” murmured Jack.

“I admit that,” said the Frenchman; “but she must have been an exceptional woman, and old Gandini—he was quite old—seems to have been deeply attached to her. He had little Angiolina reared as if she were his legitimate daughter. Special care was bestowed on her musical training. Her piano and singing teacher was a young composer named Filippo Minelli. You start, Ferrars. You have guessed. Yes, the same man. Whether, when scarcely more than a child, she was interested in him or not I do not know. Probably she does not now know herself. A love that has no present existence, as we are all aware, is a thing forgotten by women; at any rate, he would never have won her for his wife had not wholly unforeseen circumstances arisen. *Sapristi*, Ferrars! there,—look yonder,—the lady in the gray dress, which she is certainly lifting a trifle higher than necessity requires,—did you ever see such tiny feet? She must be a Russian or an Austrian; she’s too tall for a Spanish woman. Just look; they are wonderful feet, and what dainty boots!”

“She is an Englishwoman,” said Jack, coolly; “an old acquaintance of mine.” Then he drummed impatiently on the little table between him and the Frenchman, whose top was plentifully strewn



with sticky rings and spots left by lemonade glasses and ice-cream plates.

"An Englishwoman,—impossible!" cried Rambert. "An Englishwoman with such feet!"

"Signs and wonders happen!" replied Jack, mockingly, drumming faster and faster on the marble top of the little table. "Will Rambert never stop staring after pretty Mrs. Delany?" he asked himself.

Something which he had forced into the depths of his being had stirred in his breast. What had formerly been a mere vague, anxious foreboding was suddenly transformed into a passionate yearning, rushing straight towards its goal.

Meanwhile, Rambert tapped his ice-cream plate with his knife to attract the waiter's attention; then became absorbed in ordering a masagran. He had great difficulty in making the man understand what he meant.

Jack was wild with impatience. "You seem to have entirely forgotten that you stopped short in the most exciting chapter of your sensational romance," he said, at last.

"My sensational romance?" Rambert hesitated. "Oh, yes, I was in the midst of telling you poor Angiolina's antecedents, but you showed so little interest in my story."

"Sensational novels possess the power of making you read them to the end, no matter how little they suit your taste," replied Jack.

"You are very kind." Rambert bowed profoundly. "Where were we?" He reflected a mo-



ment. "Yes, yes, at Angiolina's education; but we'll pass that by. Old Gandini was so foolishly fond of his daughter that he determined to marry the Russian and make the young girl his legitimate child. But he died suddenly of the cholera, and Angiolina's mother followed him two days after. The legal heirs seized the property and turned Angiolina into the street; that is, they boarded her at a washerwoman's in the Trastevere for thirty lire a month and thought themselves generous. Angiolina was not sixteen; you can imagine her grief. The poor child constantly escaped from her jailer, wandered around the Palazzo Gandini, and finally sat sobbing on the threshold. The story attracted attention; people began to interest themselves in Gandini's illegitimate daughter, to talk of her beauty, her desolation, and the cruelty of her father's legal heirs. The new Principe's sense of moral decorum was aroused, and he forced himself to perform an act of unprecedented generosity. He announced that if a suitable husband were found for Angiolina, he was ready to settle upon her a dowry of fifty thousand lire. Minelli came forward. Do you wonder that poor Angiolina accepted him?"

Rambert paused for breath. The waiter had brought his masagran; he tasted it distrustfully, and drank it with resignation.

"H'm! Is the story over?" asked Jack.

"Over!" repeated Rambert, shrugging his shoulders,—“over! Minelli was the son of a small landowner in Umbria, besides being a composer. He



was a great favorite; the court-fool of such and such a prince, the darling of many a princess. He was always on the eve of doing something great. When he married Angiolina, he was already going down-hill. What more is there to tell,—a ruined genius who gives himself up to drink; a poor young creature who at first tries to keep her home pure, and follows her husband to the taverns to drag him out of the mire. Finally, cynical indifference on one side, unconquerable loathing on the other. From this mire Angiolina, after the death of her only child, fled to Paris. At first she tried to support herself by giving lessons in Italian. But you can imagine,—a beautiful woman like her. Poverty pressed, and accident led her to try her fortune as a model. How faultless her conduct was we all know. We all tried in vain to make an impression upon her, for we instantly perceived that she was not to be bought. Since I have known Angiolina's history, I have seen that it needed a poet, an idealist, a fellow like you, to kindle fresh ardor in this poor heart which had been trampled in the mire. The gulf between you and the past was great enough——”

“Oh, go on! go on!” cried Jack, now deeply moved.

“For some time after her flight Minelli did not inquire where his wife was living. As he could reap no further profit from her, he let her alone on condition that she should pay him an annual tribute of so many hundred francs. She was unable to send the whole amount. The scoundrel fancied



that she was living in luxury at the expense of aristocratic admirers, and wanted to seize her wealth. So he came to Paris to look after his rights. The rest you know better than I."

Jack bowed his head. He had no longer thought of trying to conceal his feelings from the Frenchman.

"Where did you see her,—in Rome?" he asked.

"No; in a little village between Perugia and Assisi. Minelli, who for years has given up all effort to do any work, is now living on the land his father left him, in a dilapidated house without a pane of glass in the windows, and a picturesque arched loggia, around which vines are twining. I saw her sitting in this loggia with her hands clasped in her lap and her eyes fixed on the street. She recognized and called to me. Her husband was in the tavern. He is always in the tavern and flirting with other women. But she would rather it should be so. He beats her sometimes, but usually lets her alone, partly because he can do nothing with her, partly because he is afraid of her."

Rambert paused. He had finished his story. The Neapolitan love-song had died away, the mechanical piano was now playing a waltz by Chopin with giddy haste and lifeless regularity.

"Perhaps you now see that you were too cruel to poor Angiolina!" remarked Rambert.

Jack raised his drooping head. His face was white as death.

"Did An—Angiolina"—how difficult it was for



him to utter her name!—"tell you this story?" he asked.

"Yes; but it has been confirmed by many others," answered Rambert.

"I don't doubt its truth," cried Jack, impatiently; "the whole history bears the stamp of truth so vividly that it would be folly to doubt it. I only wanted to know whether you talked with the poor woman long?"—he paused,—“whether she—man, must I fairly drag it out of you?—whether she spoke of me.”

"Spoke of you? Of course she spoke of you," replied Rambert. "Angiolina is interested in nothing else in the world. I told her that you were married."

"And how did she receive the news?"

"Very quietly; as a person thoroughly weary, disheartened, heart-sore, and ill receives everything."

"Is she ill?" asked Jack, hastily.

"Yes; a little malaria and a great deal of weariness of life. But she is still beautiful. Paler than ever, with such ruddy lips and eyes whose yearning and melancholy—— Shall I confess something? I tried to induce her to return to Paris. It was all in vain. Since you repulsed the poor woman, Ferrars, she has been indifferent to everything. Far be it from me to praise her to you. You have determined your life; you are married and on your wedding journey; there can be nothing more between you, at least for the time. Ha! ha! ha! Pardon an old Parisian's idle jesting.



Yet the poor thing is touching. I promised to write to her if I should see you again. What shall I say to her from you? Just a message, a kind word. Pray, Ferrars, give me authority in the matter, a blank check to fill up with pleasant speeches."

Silence reigned between the two men. At last Jack said, "Let it pass; don't meddle with the affair."

"Perhaps you'll write to her yourself,—only a few words! You know, Ponte San Giovanni; it is on the road from Perugia to Assisi," cried Rambert.

"That is throwing bridges across the ocean," replied Jack. "We will let the matter rest."

"Ponte San Giovanni! Ponte San Giovanni!" Jack murmured the name over and over again, as he strolled homeward from the Café X., home to the Hotel Brun,—home to a world in which his heart felt utterly alien.

He did not go back directly, but chose a long circuit, the longest which he could take in Bologna.

For the first time since his marriage he had been free for a few hours; he felt as if he had cast off a burden, and, as he approached the hotel, he realized the oppression anew; felt it on his shoulders, his breast, stifling his breath, pressing him to the earth.

Merciful God!

It was almost midnight when he glided up the broad staircase of the ex Palazzo Malvasi, then



passed along the marble corridor, adorned with statues, busts, and pot-plants, to No. 25. He laid his hand on the door-knob. "Jack, is it you?" whispered Mary's voice. He entered. Mary was still up, attending to her correspondence while awaiting her husband's return.

"How late you are, dearest!" she said, in a tone of gentle reproach.

"I—I met an acquaintance—we had a little chat," murmured Jack, apologetically. "Were you anxious, my angel?" Was it really his voice uttering these tender mendacities so volubly?

"Oh, no, I did not think of being anxious," answered Mary. Women of her arid type usually have very calm nerves. "What should happen to you in Bologna, where all the streets are lighted and crowded with people? But I wanted you, Jackie,—wanted you very much. I missed you; I've never been without you so long since our marriage,—the first separation! You know that is always an event in married life. Oh, dear, how long the time was without you!"

She nestled closely to him, and he put his arm around her and kissed her on the forehead. He had had much practice in playing second in these loving duets. But oh, how absurd all this seemed to him! How utterly absurd!

It was some time ere Mary succeeded in giving adequate expression to her feelings. At last she released Jack.

"I was waiting for you in order to finish my letter to Clara." For the first time she called her



sister-in-law simply Clara, without using the title. "She and Bryan intend to spend the next week in Perugia. Jack, be obliging and do me the favor of going there."

The room fairly whirled around Jack; he no longer knew what was happening. He hesitated; he would remain an honorable man; ay, he would at any cost. Then she laid her clasped hands on his shoulder. "Jack, do be obliging; I should so like to visit Perugia!"

"Well, as you choose, dear child; if you wish it so much, we will go to Perugia."

His tongue is dry; he seems to himself as false as Judas Iscariot. And Mary throws her arms around his neck, exclaiming, "Oh, you dear, dear Jack!"



## VIII.

“YES, she is very pretty and stylish; I shall have no objection to presenting her next season.”

The speaker was Lady Clara Ferrars, who, clad in a light flannel gown made with a sailor blouse, leaned idly back in a rocking-chair.

She was in the Hotel Bruffani in Perugia, in a very large, light drawing-room, whose windows afforded a view—across the street leading from the railway-station—of the Umbrian landscape, of a huge gray church of the Gothic style of architecture towering from a sea of variously-shaped roofs, of the broad, green plain intersected by roads bordered with hawthorn hedges and mulberry plantations.

Sir Bryan sat in a comfortable arm-chair at some little distance from his wife reading a newspaper, one of the English newspapers printed in such very small type and containing such an amount of material that one wonders whether anybody ever really exhausts their contents.

“Yes, Mary is a very pretty little person,” he replied, assenting to the good opinion Lady Clara had expressed. “Under the circumstances, Jack could have made no match more suitable.”

This settled the matter for him, and he again became absorbed in reading his paper.



"Why, he might have married into a better family," observed Lady Clara; and as Sir Bryan, at this remark, stared somewhat ill-naturedly at her with his dull green eyes, she added, laughing, "Excuse me; I had entirely forgotten that Mary is a relative of yours."

"Jack's relative, too," retorted Sir Bryan, not without a touch of irritation.

"Yes, Jack's relative, too, of course," Lady Clara repeated.

"It seems to surprise you," growled Sir Bryan; "is the fact especially new?"

"No; but it always seems strange," said Lady Clara, dryly. With the exception of hunting, annoying her husband was the greatest pleasure her existence afforded. "That Mary is related to *you* no longer seems strange, but that she is related to Jack, too, is positively comical."

"Why comical?" grunted Sir Bryan.

"Jack is such an awfully nice fellow," said Lady Clara, carelessly, glancing at her husband from underneath her drooping lashes with an especially pleasant smile.

"Thank you most kindly," returned Sir Bryan, while the *Times* rustled angrily in his hands. "Won't you have the goodness to inform me why you did not marry Jack instead of me?"

Lady Clara rested her white-flannel elbows more heavily on the arms of her chair and, interlacing her fingers, replied, with her own slow, provoking smile, "Probably because he never fell in love with me."



"Or perhaps because the property at his command did not satisfy your needs," said Sir Bryan, rudely.

Lady Clara scanned him from head to foot.

"How vulgar you are, Bryan!" she cried, sharply.

The whole vocabulary of the most comprehensive dictionary contained no word which could have angered Sir Bryan more deeply than "vulgar."

The veins on his forehead swelled to the size of clothes-lines; he clinched his fist; he looked as if he longed to throw something at his wife's head.

She folded her arms across her bosom and smiled defiantly. A low tap at the door interrupted this agreeable family scene.

"Come in!" called Lady Clara.

Sir Bryan had not heard the knock. Jack entered; his face was very pale and there were dark rings under his eyes.

"How terribly you look, old fellow!" said Lady Clara. "Why, you are as green as a cucumber!"

"My head aches," answered Jack.

"What don't you have now!" cried Lady Clara, her tone half laughing, half pitying.

"The heat exhausts me."

"The heat? It's comparatively cool; the stones are still wet from the last shower," commented Lady Clara.

"Well, to tell you the truth," cried Jack, in the irritated tone which his voice had of late assumed at the most trivial causes, "I can't bear the close



air of the house, and I haven't been able to get out of doors since my wife sprained her ankle three days ago. If this continues I shall go crazy; I can bear it no longer." Then, as if ashamed of this outburst of frankness, he added, "It is very sweet and kind in Mary to be so unwilling to have me leave her; but—but—well! I only wanted to ask, Clara, if you would stay with her a little while, while I go out to walk for an hour,—only an hour."

"Why, of course, Jack," cried his sister-in-law. "You know if I can do you any little favor I am always ready."

"What a capital woman you are!" exclaimed Jack, enthusiastically.

"Sometimes I admire myself," she replied, glancing over her shoulder at her husband.

Lady Clara left the drawing-room with Jack, passed through the pleasant court filled with palms and comfortable willow furniture, and went down a light, neatly-kept staircase. Half-way, he stood still and, suddenly looking at his sister-in-law, said, "Clara, why did you really marry Bryan?"

"Because he offered himself to me three times, and my father, who was on the verge of bankruptcy, told me that the future of my younger brothers and sisters depended upon my making a brilliant match. I had only the choice between your brother, who wanted to marry me simply on account of my blue blood, and another rich man who was madly in love with me. Under the circumstances——" She hesitated.



“Under the circumstances——” repeated Jack.

Lady Clara began to laugh, a clear, ringing, anything but mirthful laugh. “Under the circumstances,” she said, “I chose your brother.”

“You chose my brother,” Jack repeated, absently.

“Of course.” Lady Clara, who was standing two steps higher than her brother-in-law, turned towards him and laid her hand on his shoulder. “You see, my dear boy, with a husband who is well-nigh as indifferent to you as you are to him, you can endure the situation, because at least a portion of your life is at your own disposal. You can have time to breathe, to rest. With a husband who loved you while you were unable to respond, life would become unbearable. That is the hell which leads straight to the mad-house, to suicide, or some other sin. These vehement and scandalous culminating points of the situation will be spared me at your brother’s side. For this I owe him a debt of gratitude, and pay it. I make impertinent speeches to him, but I am a faithful wife. What is the matter, Jack? You are livid.”

“Nothing, nothing.” Jack shivered slightly. “A little faintness; it is over.”

A minute after, Jack had reached his wife’s room, and, opening the door, pushed his sister-in-law gently forward.

“Oh, Clara, how sweet!” cried Mary. This intimate relationship with the daughter of an earl had not ceased to exert its charm upon her.

“I’ve come to stay with you while your tall hus-



band gets a little air," said Lady Clara. "He is looking wretchedly after his three days' nursing."

"Really, Jack, my darling?" cried Mary, holding out her arms to him. He yielded resignedly to her embrace, returning her kiss.

For the first time his sister-in-law watched him during this proceeding. She bit her lips. "Now, away with you, my boy!" she cried. "We don't need you; we'll entertain each other a little while alone. Good-by."

"Don't stay away too long, darling, sweetheart," cooed Mary.

He glanced back again and left the room.

Almost a week had passed since Jack had left Bologna with his wife. From Bologna they went to Florence, where, at Mary's express desire, they remained scarcely twenty-four hours. They started on the noon train, rushing past cypress-forests, at whose feet bloomed the most luxuriant centifolias; across broad rivers which the sun had quaffed till, for the moment, nothing remained save a slender, muddy rill, winding slowly, sluggishly, along at the very bottom of the deep, rocky bed; past the silhouettes of ancient fortresses which, crowning a hill, stood forth in gray sombre relief against the sky, a labyrinth of walls, church-towers, crumbling palaces, and plain stone houses; past broad, still lakes, whose stirless surfaces in the brilliant sunshine resembled a shield of dull lead, surrounded by a dense garland of rushes six feet high; past villages whose brown, windowless houses looked as



if they had been recently consumed by the flames, and amid which yellow, haggard people stole languidly about as if some terrible burden of weariness crushed them to the earth. Then came more green fields, mulberry-trees, and everywhere poppies, blooming poppies.

Towards evening they reached Perugia, and drove in a comparatively respectable two-horse carriage with rattling bells up the steep, winding street leading from the station to the Hotel Brufani, which stands on the principal square of Perugia.

This was four days ago.

Lady Clara and Sir Bryan met them at the door of the hotel. For one whole day there was nothing but cordial speeches, laughter, jesting, visits to the galleries; then Mary slipped on the Rathhaus stairs and sprained her ankle. From that time forth, with tyrannical tenderness, she kept Jack by her lounge.

Poor Jack!

He uttered a sigh of relief as, leaving the hotel behind him, he entered the great square. But the feeling did not last long. Restlessness had seized him,—a restlessness which neither had nor desired a goal.

At first he walked merely to keep in motion, up steps and down, along the irregular, hilly, narrow streets of Perugia, overarched by stone vaults, blind to the marvellous picturesque charm of the little city, blind to the dark-blue sky visible between and above the peculiar blackish-gray angles of the



masonry. It seemed as if he had just stripped off an oppressive burden and an enemy was pursuing him to load his shoulders with it again. He was perfectly aware that flight was futile, that the foe would overtake him, yet he ran, ran involuntarily, till the perspiration trickled down his brow, his breath came in gasps, and people stared after him, saying that he was crazy.

After having, in a moment of intense excitement, yielded to his weakness, and at his wife's entreaty accompanied her to Perugia, the sense of duty again awoke within him. He had intended to leave Perugia without seeking Angiolina.

He did what he could to conquer himself. But——

His sister-in-law's words came back to his memory: "To live with a person who is as indifferent as yourself is endurable. But to live with a person to whose love you cannot respond is unbearable; it leads to the mad-house, to suicide, or some other sin."

Away, away!

He would fain have packed up and fled from Perugia that very day.

Suddenly he noticed that some one was following him, a brown, ragged rascal with broken front teeth.

Jack stared at him. Did the fellow want to beg? No.

He raised his hand to his peaked felt hat, saying, "His Excellency Signor Ferrars?"

"Yes; what is it?" Jack answered, impatiently.



"I have a letter for your Excellency."

"A letter. From whom?"

"From Signora Angiolina Minelli."

Jack held out his hand for the letter.

"I promised the signora not to give it to the signor where we could be seen. I have already waited hours at the door of the Hotel Bruffani. I had lost sight of the gentleman," said the lad.

"Give me the letter," said Jack, imperiously.

"Here it is."

Jack seized it as one might touch a burning coal and dropped it into his pocket. Then he gave the boy some money.

He looked at the coin and shook his head.

"What more do you want?" asked Jack, harshly.

"Some proof that I have delivered the letter."

Jack thought a moment, then searched for a visiting-card, which he handed to the boy.

"Is there no answer?" asked the Italian.

"I don't know; it's no concern of yours. Be off."

The lad did not wait to be told twice.

Jack now stood alone in a narrow alley, whose pavement, made of large, irregular stones, sunk towards the middle.

The windows glittered behind deep, rough window niches. Most of them stood open. Flower-pots containing scarlet carnations or geraniums stood on every sill, and a cat lay on nearly every ledge. One leaped down upon Jack's shoulder; he started. A pretty, black-haired young girl, with big gold rings in her ears and bare, statuesque



arms, smiled brightly at him. More faces appeared at the windows: people were watching him. What did he want? What was he seeking? Ay, what was he seeking? A place to read a letter undisturbed,—the letter Angiolina had sent him. Involuntarily he left the alley and walked towards the cathedral.

Passing the blind or crippled beggars who form a line before the door, he entered the church, a church full of the odor of incense and wax candles, and pervaded by a mystical dusk. He sat down in one of the brown pews at the left of the door, holding the letter unopened in his hand, and gazed straight before him at the red glimmer of the high altar where the vesper service was being celebrated. From the organ a love aria from one of Verdi's operas floated softly, dreamily.

Jack pressed his hand on his brow, striving to think. What could be in the letter, Angiolina's letter, the letter of a woman who worshipped him, and whom he—yes, whom he also adored? She was summoning him,—he knew that ere he opened it,—summoning him from his wife's side to hers scarcely six weeks after his wedding-day, while on his wedding-journey. He told himself that it would be better to destroy the note unread. He was in the act of doing so, when pity raised the insinuating voice which pleads in behalf of all great temptations and leads to sin: Hide behind me; make yourself very small. I will carry you through. He had no right to destroy a dying woman's letter unread, said pity.



Pity conquered. He opened the letter and read :

“ PONTE SAN GIOVANNI.

“Day after day has passed since in Paris you kissed me for the first time and, directly after, thrust me from you. Now they will soon number three hundred and sixty-five,—a year, a whole year since the date of my happiness, my misery.

“Meanwhile my life has been what it could not fail to be away from you—and at his side,—loathing and torture.

“I should have flung it from me long ago, had not the yearning to see you once more ere I died prevented me from closing my eyes. But I cannot die,—do you hear?—I cannot, ere I have seen you again; just *once*, for a single hour, fifteen minutes, a moment. One kiss, only one,—then I will die—gladly. What angered you so deeply?—that I was not what you believed me? I was not to blame. Or that I deceived you? Yes, I might have been truthful; but, oh, heaven! It was in my little room; do you remember? The flowers which we had gathered were standing around us; you had just given me the first kiss. How long I had waited for that kiss, you dear, foolish fellow!—half-famishing for it. And scarcely had you bestowed it, in the very midst of my heaven of bliss, you asked a question which tore me from my rapture down to the wretchedness, the slough of misery of my past. And so I lied,—lied, although what I had to confess was no baseness, only a misfortune,—lied



because I knew that what I ought to confess to you would lower me in your eyes, even though it was but misfortune. I lied,—lied, though I knew that, sooner or later, I would be compelled to own the truth,—lied in order to keep one hour of joy free from memories and explanations which would have sullied it. Perhaps I lied simply because, at that moment, I had forgotten everything which was past.

“Had I suspected what you were going to say after I had uttered the falsehood, perhaps I might not have pronounced those words. Do you remember, my darling? You said that you sought me for your wife,—yes, you really did.

“You little know how I felt,—your wife! My brain whirls when I think that such a thing might have been possible. It was not possible; the happiness I should have possessed at your side, as your wife, does not exist in this world.

“I have only reminded you that you once desired to devote your whole life to me in order that you might not now be too niggardly to grant me an hour, a single hour, a moment.

“I know that you are married; Rambert has told me so. Since the day before yesterday I have known that you were in Perugia. I am ill. I hope that my end is drawing near, but I cannot die ere seeing you for the last time.

“Grant me but one hour of your life, which you meant should be wholly mine,—but one single hour. Then you can return to your wife and I to the loving Heavenly Father.



“I shall expect you, as I have expected you hourly since the day you thrust me from you in Paris. I shall watch for you to come down the street through which you must pass. I am almost always alone every afternoon until night. Besides, you can inquire at the basket-weaver’s at our street corner (our street is the *Via dei Frati*). God bless you!

“ANGIOLINA.”

This was Angiolina’s letter. Jack had deciphered it the first time with difficulty; his knowledge of Italian was not sufficient to permit him to read it easily, but it enabled him to understand it.

Now he had read it three times. Every sweet, tender syllable was imprinted on his heart. His head was burning. What should he do? What should he do?

He glanced around as if seeking counsel. The church was almost empty. A few old women were telling their beads in one corner, in another a beautiful girl, her brown tresses gilded by a wandering sunbeam, was jesting with a soldier; tourists were passing in and out.

The priest had ceased to mutter words of prayer at the high altar. A somewhat overgrown acolyte was putting out the candles. The dreamy love melody still floated in soft, wailing notes from the organ through the mystic twilight of the church, whose atmosphere was heavy with incense.

Jack read Angiolina’s letter a fourth time; he already knew its contents by heart.



An abyss had opened before him. Yet his delicacy of feeling, his compassion, all the best and warmest impulses of his nature, united to undermine his last remnant of the sense of duty.

Angiolina was ill,—dying. Should he leave her to die without making a single effort to lighten her suffering?

Through the open door-way a soft, warm air mingled with the cool, dank atmosphere of the church and fanned Jack's cheek, damp with the dews of agony. He kissed Angiolina's letter, then slowly tore it into little shreds; so very, very small that the whole sheet was soon reduced to a whitish-gray powder. Then, rising, he left the cathedral and scattered the powder in the great square, where the May breeze swept it merrily hither and thither.

Half an hour later he entered Mary's room, carrying in his hand a big bunch of red roses.

Mary, lying on the lounge, with her bandaged ankle and loose wrapper,—the correct wrapper for a young married lady,—was playing chess with her aristocratic sister-in-law.

"How long you have been away!" she sighed; then glancing at the roses: "Oh, Jack, how beautiful! Are they for me?"

"For whom else?" taking a chair beside the couch where she was reclining.

Lady Clara slipped one of her thumbs through her yellow-leather belt and, fixing her eyes on the roses with rather a peculiar expression, smiled.



## IX.

THE dull, leaden heat of the sirocco broods over the little village with its irregular labyrinth of houses stretching along the right and left bank of the river. A heavy sense of oppression, blended with a fierce restlessness, weighs on every human being. They are weary, yet cannot remain quiet anywhere, neither in this spot nor in that.

Beneath the huge gray-stone arches which span the bed of the river a sluggish yellow thread of water creeps far below,—the Tiber. The shop-windows in the houses on the main square, an unpaved main square, filled with cobble-stones strewn with hay and chaff, are all closed.

In the centre of the square stands the Podesta, a newspaper in his hand, and beside him, leaning on his bulging green umbrella, clad in a very shabby gown, with a three-cornered felt hat, fairly shining with grease, on his head, stands the pastor, a handsome, black-eyed old man, asking what news there is in the world.

The clinking of glasses and a loud uproar of song and laughter echo from a neighboring tavern. The pastor raises his hand to his ear. "There's Minelli," he says; "may God have mercy on his soul—or not,—it's all the same to me. The scoundrel!"



Somewhat away from the great square, on the extreme edge of the little town, in a street climbing up the hill-side, is a brown house, rough and unplastered, narrow, almost like a tower, with gloomy windows sunk deep in the walls.

A primitive loggia runs along the front of the house, and a bush of dark-red roses twines its blossoming branches around the ugly masonry. Beside the house, reaching almost to the roof, is a large acacia-tree in full bloom. It looks spectrally white relieved against the leaden gray of the sky.

In the loggia stands Angiolina. She wears a white dress, and a bunch of red roses in her belt. With both hands resting on the stone railing, she gazes down the street.

How often she has stood there in the burning, scorching, parching midsummer, in autumn, in chilling winter, and now in the storm-swept spring, her eyes, full of yearning and expectation, fixed upon the street!

All day long she has waited for him—in vain.

Will he come at last? He must come in reply to the letter she has written, if he has a heart in his body, and in that heart lives even a spark—not of love, no, she renounces that—of pity for her. She is weary, she can scarcely stand, yet hour after hour she still lingers there, gazing out into the street. The perfume of the acacia-blossoms grows oppressive, confusing, the sirocco mist more and more dense.



There is no more hope,—no, he is not coming. She would not let him go, she, his cousin, who has now become his wife. Is it possible that he loves this cousin? Angiolina shrugs her shoulders. She once saw him with her; she does not believe that he can love her. When she heard that he was married, it was a consolation to learn at the same time that he had wedded his cousin. He cannot love her, surely he cannot! A sort of cruel triumph thrills her at the thought.

But why does he not come? He might have granted one hour, one little hour to her to whom he wished to devote his whole existence.

She buries her long, slim hands in her black hair and bites her red lips till they are sore. She is so weary that her feet will scarcely support her, and turns her head away from the street.

Then in the distance she hears the faint tinkling of bells; a stranger's carriage is stopping in the market-place. How keen her hearing has grown during these long hours of watching and listening! A step comes down the street, a young, elastic step which she knows. Then a voice asks, "Where is Signora Minelli's house?"

She bends forward. A man in a dusty white-flannel suit is approaching along the street. She stands as if rooted to the earth. He looks up. His eyes meet hers; she turns towards the steps, breathless, agitated, with outstretched arms.

He has come to bring one last ray of comfort to a dying woman, nothing more; to forgive a dying



woman, nothing more; to atone for his brutality to a weak, helpless woman, nothing more.

And when he sees her!

The twilight deepens; they have forgotten God, the world, and time!

May God have mercy on them!

In the low-ceiled bar-room of the coffee-house and principal place of entertainment in the village the din grows louder and louder.

It is a room which serves at the same time for a grocery-shop. Above the door opening into the market-place hang garlands of sausages, vegetables, and white bladders. Several casks standing about cumber the space. Behind a zinc-covered counter stands a stout Italian woman with a pale-yellow kerchief wound loosely about her statuesque throat and thick gold pins in her tousled hair. She stands amid a whole battery of wine- and brandy-bottles, with her fat arms bared to the elbows, and a linen chemise puffing out over her low bodice.

Minelli, half intoxicated, sits at a table, a jug of the country wine by his side, playing cards with two equally dissipated companions. When he wins he throws back his head and sings a defiant melody, a verse from the drinking song in his opera, which created such a furore ten years ago, but which no one remembers now except himself.

A red-haired woman with a coral necklace round her throat stands behind him, now and then advising him what cards to play. He wins, and,



handing her the jug of wine which stands before him, allows her to drink from it.

Suddenly in an outburst of riotous mirth he draws her down on his knee.

Just at that moment a slender, smooth-shaven, jaundiced-looking man enters the tavern—the sexton of Ponte San Giovanni, who also adds to his income by composing the love-letters of all the village youth who are unable to write; an occupation which suits him the better because, as is positively asserted on all sides, he has never had occasion to indite a love-missive in his own behalf.

This contrast between his occupation and his personal experiences has somewhat embittered him. It is rumored that he spends the time during which he is not sitting before his inkstand or employed in the church in watching for some happiness which he can destroy.

He now approaches Minelli, and, passing his hand over his smooth upper lip, says, with a malevolent grimace, “You seem to be having a very good time for a married man, Signor Minelli.”

Dissolute as the ex-composer may be, he still maintains his dignity to a certain extent and insists upon being treated as a gentleman by those with whom he associates.

“Is it any business of yours, you envious fellow?” retorts Minelli.

“H’m! Envy is one’s own affair,” replies the sexton, shrugging his shoulders. “If I envied you any woman, it would be your beautiful wife and not yonder red-haired wench. But”—the sexton



rubbs his hands thoughtfully—"Signora Angiolina apparently cares nothing about you, so you may console yourself with whoever you can."

Minelli's bloodshot eyes flash, and he strikes the table so violently with his clinched fist that the jugs and glasses rattle.

"I want to know nothing about her, do you hear? once for all."

"Indeed; well, then——" The sexton suddenly interrupts himself and merely grins most significantly.

"Then; well, what then?" shrieks Minelli.

"Why, then you probably don't mind your wife's having visitors in your absence."

"Visitors?" Minelli pushed the red-haired girl from his knee, repeating, "Visitors? It's a lie!"

"Then go and convince yourself. Two hours ago I saw a stranger enter the Casa Minelli. A tall, handsome fellow; an Englishman, if I'm not mistaken; one of the people to whom we say *Excellenza*."

"Two hours ago!" cries one of the bystanders, laughing, "and you haven't had time to warn Minelli before?"

The sexton shrugs his shoulders: "I didn't see the necessity, and wanted to allow the young people time for a little conversation. It is always said that I am a mischief-maker; I think, for once, I have proved the contrary. He was a handsome gentleman,—could crush a fellow like you, Signor Minelli, between his thumb and forefinger."



All his hearers laugh except Minelli, who, with a face greenish-white, as if suddenly attacked by malaria, straightens himself and leaves the tavern.

"You've hoaxed Minelli finely, you old torment!" cries some one in the crowd, which meanwhile has gathered in the reeking bar-room.

"I?" The sexton indignantly repels the suspicion. "No; the proud Signora Minelli really has had a gentleman calling on her to-day."

"But he has gone?" asks a voice.

"I scarcely think so; at least, his carriage is still standing in front of the *osteria* waiting for his lordship," replies the sexton, approaching the counter to order a glass of wormwood.

"Then may God forgive you the mischief you have done!" answers some one in the group.

"Pshaw!" The sexton makes a contemptuous gesture with his outspread hand. "There's nothing to fear; he's a man like a tower, I tell you; he'll squash your Minelli between his thumb and forefinger. If he so much as casts a haughty glance at Minelli he'll beat a retreat."

But the crowd does not hear. All have rushed out to overtake the half-intoxicated Minelli and prevent trouble. The sexton remains alone in the little smoky room.

He sits down at the table which Minelli and his boon companions have just deserted, where the cards still lie scattered among the sticky circles left by the wine-jugs and glasses. Taking up the cards, he begins thoughtfully to build houses with



them ; silence surrounds him, save for the flies buzzing on the low ceiling.

They had forgotten everything,—God, the world, and time !

When Jack at last awoke from his dream he was startled to find it so late, and told Angiolina that he must go. She did not detain him. “Go,” she said, simply ; “I know it must be so.”

Her voice sounded so sorrowful that he was glad not to see her face, yet the next instant he told himself that he could not leave her without having once more gazed his fill at her pallid, mournful loveliness.

Angiolina was obliged to light a lamp that he might take his last look at her.

He gazed long and tenderly. It was she herself who warned him that it was time to go.

“You know it was agreed,” she said, in a strangely solemn tone, “only one hour, then you return to your wife, and I to the loving Heavenly Father. Farewell ; it was joy, and it was a sin. I will take the punishment on myself for both. Farewell.”

One more kiss, and he had gone. But he could scarcely set one foot before the other. He fancied he heard behind him the faint rustle of paper, like the sound made in opening a powder at the apothecary’s. Like a flash of lightning the memory of her last words, which suddenly gained a totally new meaning, darted through his brain.

Had she taken poison ?



He turned. There she stood, one hand resting on the railing of the loggia, to watch him as he passed down the street.

The moon was struggling through the grayish-violet sirocco mist; its red-gold disk floated over the acacia-tree, whose white blossoms exhaled a stupefying fragrance. Its wan light shimmered on Angiolina's face, death-pale and quivering with agony.

"Angiolina, for God's sake!" cried Jack, clasping her in his arms.

A light, cat-like tread came up the stairs. Neither heard it.

A knife flashed,—the assassin's steel sank deep into the young Englishman's back between the shoulder-blades.

A moment after the street resounded with shouts and uproar; men rushed up the steps. Too late: Minelli had escaped. Angiolina sat on a bench leaning against the stone wall, and half kneeling at her feet, with his head resting on her lap, was a dying man.

Ere the physician who was summoned arrived both were lifeless.

Until far into the night the wildest excitement prevailed around the lonely, desolate house, beside which bloomed the acacia.

The Podesta came with his clerk to take down the facts. They sat in the loggia at a square, worm-eaten table, on which burned a flickering, malodorous tallow candle. The people pressed against the wall, telling each other in low tones



tales which surpassed in horror the tragedy just witnessed. The light flared in the wind, casting its wavering yellow rays on the Podesta and his clerk, then on the whispering throng, or a large pool of blood beside the bench which stood against the wall; a disagreeable saline odor blended with the fragrance of the acacia-tree.

The legal proceedings were almost finished when a tall, black-robed figure came up the stairs,—the pastor, with his long white locks and venerable face.

He was called “the saint” in the hamlet.

“There is nothing for you to do here, Reverend Father,” cried the Podesta; “he was a Protestant, and she has committed suicide.”

But the pastor did not heed the remark, and asked to be taken where the bodies lay.

He was obeyed.

They had been placed on the hard stone floor in the large bare room adjoining the loggia.

There they lay, side by side, both stained with blood, which had left only their pallid faces free. A woman who had come with the priest lowered the lamp she carried till its light fell upon the dead.

The pastor started; it seemed as if he had never beheld anything more beautiful than these two human beings, whom even death had held sacred, snatching them in the full strength of life without marring their splendid perfection.

He was fairly startled by the happy expression of both dead faces; they looked as if their last glance had caught a glimpse of heaven.



“Victims of passion! *Morti di passione!*” murmured the woman who held the light.

“*Passione!*” The word sounded strangely alluring and melancholy in the bare room, whose walls seemed to echo it back with a shuddering sound.

“*Di passione!*”

Drops of perspiration stood on the old pastor’s brow; he knelt beside the two corpses, the Protestant and the suicide, and prayed fervently.

When, some time after, he left the Casa Minelli, his hands were convulsively clinched and his head was bowed.

He wandered through the fields in the faint, shimmering moonlight till the gray dawn of morning. A restlessness which he had never experienced in all his long, saintly life thrilled every nerve and fired his blood.

The news of Jack’s murder, and the circumstances under which it occurred, spread all over England.

There were long discussions in the newspapers; the affair was reviewed as a horrible scandal, criticised, censured, and laid on the shelf.

The tidings of his death were of course a terrible shock to his nearest relatives. But, strangely enough, Sir Bryan’s Philistinism bowed the knee to the voice of blood. The prosaic business man lost flesh, wandered among his fellows for six months with downcast eyes, gloomy and taciturn, as if he felt guilty of a crime. Was it merely the stain inflicted upon the Ferrars’ respectability by



the catastrophe to which Jack's life was sacrificed? It did not seem so.

He avoided as far as possible any mention of his name; but if he could not escape speaking of him, he never failed to add some pitying word.

Lady Clara boldly defended her brother-in-law through thick and thin in the very face of English cant.

Mrs. Winter wept, aged visibly, and kept her thoughts of the matter to herself.

Even Sarah was indulgent, content to make philosophical remarks about the affair, which she attributed wholly to alcoholism.

Only one person nearly connected with Jack remained implacable,—the widowed Mrs. Ferrars.

After the first moments of grief for his loss, horror at the suddenness of his death, were over, she felt nothing save the disgrace, the humiliations inflicted upon her by the circumstances attending Jack's end. She never spoke of him except with the most icy coldness; nay, she picked up all the stones in his past to hurl at him.

For all these persons the stream of life has flowed on again over Jack's body. His death—as well as his life—is half forgotten. Even Mrs. Winter has taken up the thread of her existence anew.

There is but one person who has been unable to recover from the tragedy in the Casa Minelli,—a stranger, the old pastor of Ponte San Giovanni.

When people talk of him now, they point sig-



nificantly to their foreheads. He is no longer the same man.

Especially in May, when the sirocco broods over the land, the demon of the spring, he roves about among the fields, as if pursued by the Evil One, to kneel at last beside the iron railing which encloses the little spot of earth where lie buried the Protestant and the suicide. They interred them side by side,—both the outcasts.

The poor pastor often lingers there until late into the night, until darkness shrouds the world and the scarlet poppies which bloom on the graves grow black and shut their cups, or until the moon, scattering the haze of the sirocco, pours a livid light upon the broad, level landscape where the flowers are drooping. With clasped hands and eyes fixed on the poppies, he ponders ever on the self-same thought: that it must be happiness to die young in the midst of a last great joy. And then he asks himself whether love is a work of Satan or a work of God.

THE END.







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